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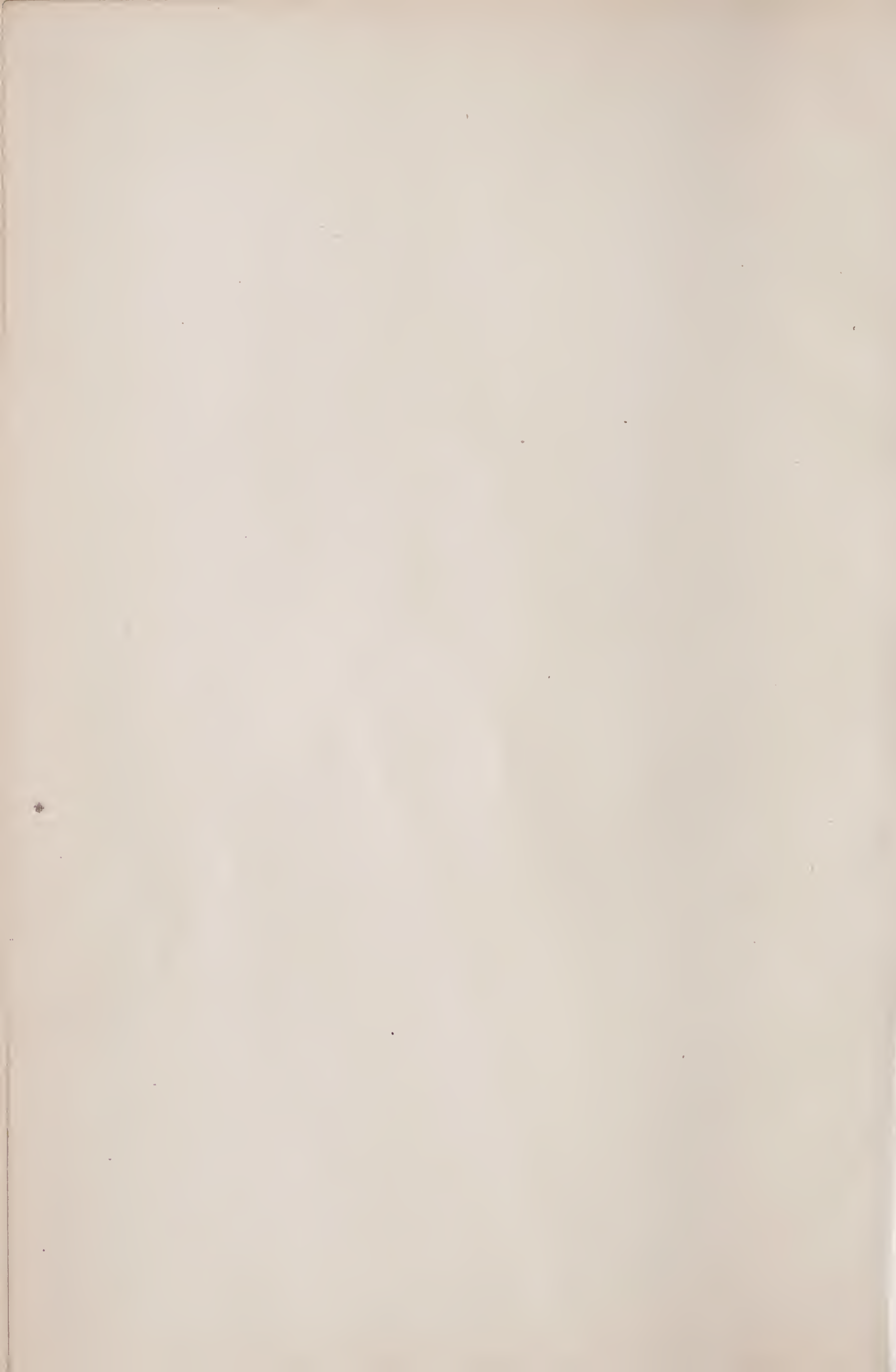








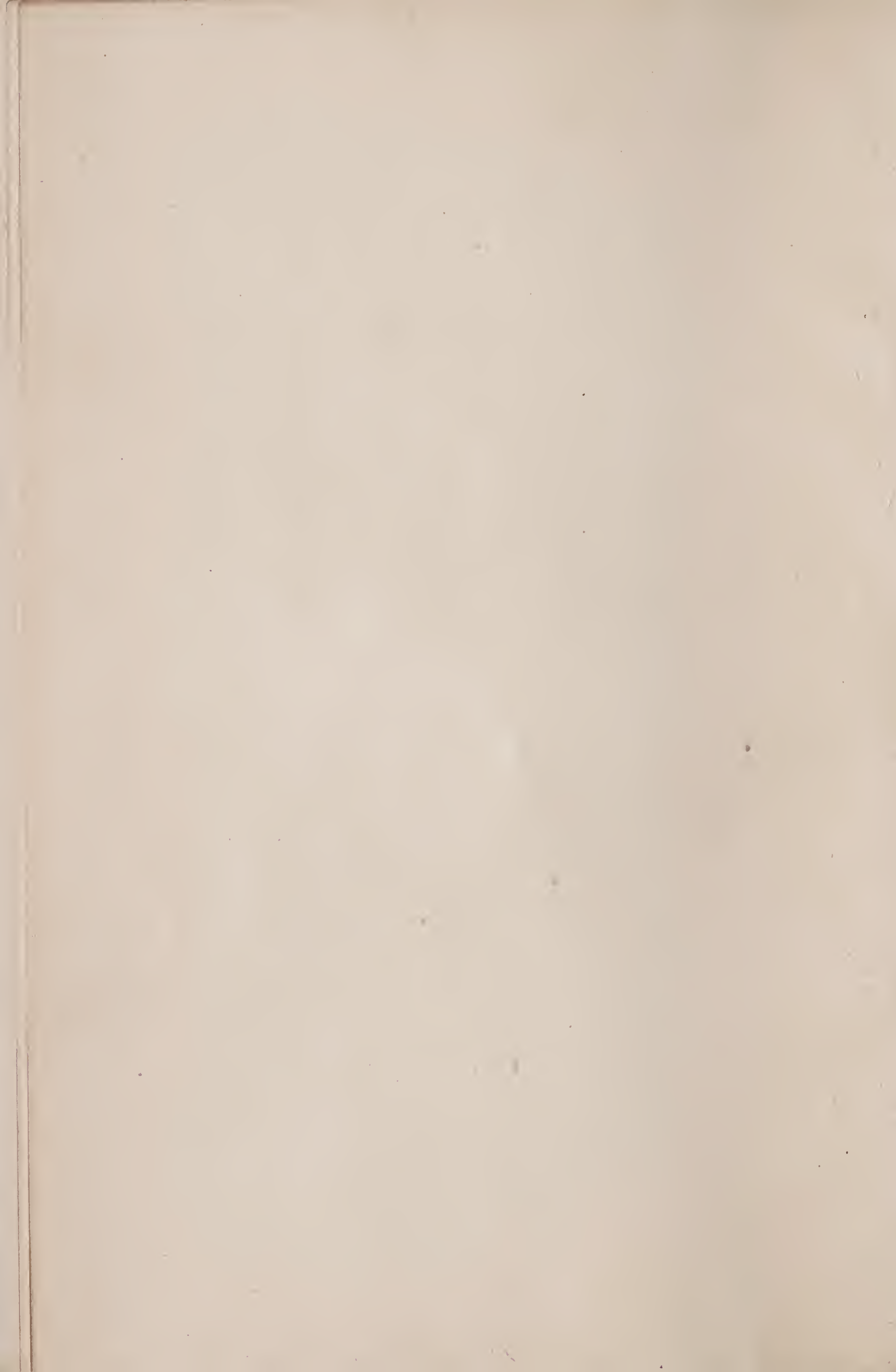














# THE ARMORER



## —OF TYRE

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.



Chicago  
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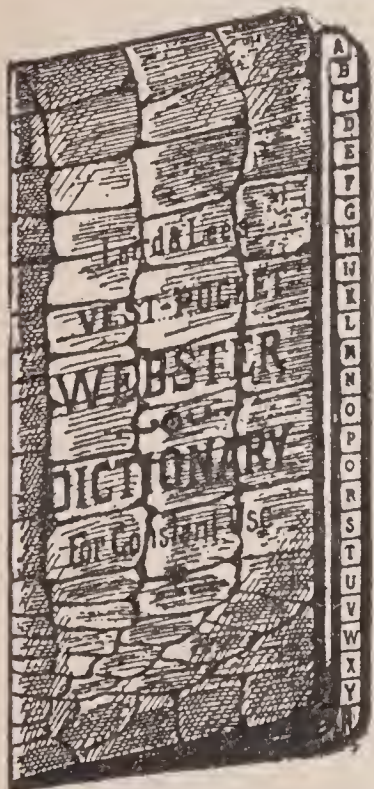


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Discovery of the Fugitives.—page 128



# THE ARMORER OF TYRE

BY

SYLVANUS COBB, Jr.

Author of "THE GUNMAKER OF MOSCOW," "RED HAND," etc.

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# THE ARMORER OF TYRE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ARMORER AND THE PRINCE.

**T**AKE we now our readers to ancient Island Tyre, the home of merchant princes—so long the “Queen of the Sea,” and the depot of wealth, power, and splendor. The small island upon which it stood contained the bone and sinew that oft and again resisted the myriad hosts of ambitious conquerors. The first city of Tyre had been built upon the coast of Phœnicia; but when it was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, the inhabitants, after withstanding a siege of thirteen years, removed to the small island opposite, where they built the new city, which soon rivalled the former in magnificence. In process of time, however, the island was connected with the main land, and the peninsula thus formed is its geographical position at the present time.

Here it was, upon this island, that the great Alexander, with his mighty avalanche of Macedonian steel, was stayed for over half a year in his blood-stained course. Its buildings, towering even higher toward heaven than those of Rome—its temples and its colossal statues of brass and Parian marble, its extensive bazaars, glittering with the



untold riches of the East, and scented by the rarest spices of Arabia, its harbors filled with ships, all, all speak to us of a grandeur rarely excelled in the annals of the world.

Mapen sat upon the throne of Tyre. He had assisted the weak-brained, haughty Xerxes in his magnificent failure in Greece, and he had returned to his sea-girt city with a morose and jealous disposition, which, added to the tyranny he had ever exercised, made him generally detested by his subjects; but yet he felt his throne firm beneath him, for the wealth of the city was in his interests.

It was late in the afternoon. Near the northern wall of the city stood a rough, yet stout dwelling, the front apartment of which was occupied as the workshop of an artisan. Within said apartment were a forge and anvils, together with the numerous other appurtenances and fixtures necessary for the working of various metals. Within the fire that burned upon the forge lay a large plate of iron, and near by, with his arms folded across his breast, stood a middle-aged man engaged in watching the heated metal, while a small boy was working the rudely constructed bellows that gave force to the heat.

The man was large in stature, stout and powerful in his build, with his arms, neck and breast fairly worked into ridges by the iron muscles that dwelt and labored there. His neck was short and thick, and his head was covered by a mass of short, curly, black hair. His dress was simple in the extreme, consisting of a sort of linen swathing passed several times about his loins and the lower part of his breast, and then over the left shoulder, thus leaving his right shoulder and arm and the upper part of his breast entirely bare. From this depended a short woollen skirt, reaching to the knees, beneath which appeared a pair of goat-skin tights and sandals.

Such was Gio, the Armorer of Tyre. That he was not a Tyrian by birth, his very appearance would at once indicate; but whence he came none knew. Yet none more than he possessed the love of the people, nor was there a man in





Gio preventing the search for Marina.—page 9







the city who would have been more missed. Humble artisan as he was, the nobles depended upon him for their best weapons, and no one ever passed his shop, when he was at work, without bestowing upon him more than ordinary interest. Some people whispered strange stories about the stout armorer, and a few even went so far as to say that he had superhuman power bestowed upon him by Hercules; but such tales and whisperings were vague and dreamy, though, perhaps, in some instances, if we consider the superstition of the times, they were not without foundation.

The artisan, however, took little notice of these things, but with a purpose that lay deep within his own bosom he followed steadily on in the path he had chosen, paying no attention to what did not concern him.

Gio watched the iron with a practiced eye, and at length he drew it forth, and laying it upon a slightly concave anvil he began to fashion it into a breastplate. His blows fell quick and heavy, and ere long it fitted the wooden model that lay by his side. A bright smile passed over his open countenance as he saw how well he had calculated upon the capacity of the heat to which he had subjected his metal, and turning to his boy, he said, as he laid the plate upon a bench:—

“There, Abal, let the fire go out for to-night, and prepare this plate for the polish.”

“Whose is it, sir?” asked the boy, as he let go the brake of the bellows and stepped forward.

“’Tis for Strato.”

“The young merchant?”

“Yes.”

“So I thought.”

“Then why did you ask?” returned Gio, who seemed by his manner to allow his boy unbounded liberty.

“Because I thought ’twas strange he should want one.”

“All honest men in Tyre may need them ere long.”

“I see not why.”

“Then wait for experience. That is the surest teacher.”



Gio spoke this last remark in a sort of gruff tone, and Abal turned to the work to which he had been appointed. Twice he seemed upon the point of asking another question, but the stern frown that had settled down upon the brow of the stout armorer kept him silent. The boy, however, did not go on with his work; for hardly had he turned to do so, when both he and his master were startled by the sudden entrance of a fleeing girl. Her long hair was floating over her shoulders, her dress was dusty and disordered, and her features were pale with terror.

"Oh!" she uttered, as she clasped her hands in agony, "save me, sir! Whoever you be, save me!"

"How? From whom?" asked Gio, seeming struck, not only by the suddenness of the affair, but also by the remarkable beauty of the applicant.

"From my enemies!"

"And can one like you have enemies in our good city of Tyre?" uttered the armorer, lying his broad palm upon the brow of the girl.

"Yes. Oh, speak not further, but hide me!" cried she, as she cast her eyes fearfully behind her. "I am an innocent girl—indeed I am. Save me from the murderer of my father!"

"Who is he—thy father?"

"He was Kison Ludim."

"Now, by the great god Hercules!" shouted Gio, "I know who thou art, and who it is that seeks thee. Here, Abal, lead the lady to my daughter's chamber. Quick!"

The boy opened a small door that led out from the back of the shop, and as the girl darted through he closed and bolted it behind him, and in a moment more their steps were heard upon the stone staircase beyond.

Gio smote his bronzed fist upon his breast, and a half uttered curse rested upon his lips, while the frown that had beclouded his face upon the speech of his boy now grew to a fearful blackness. Half a dozen steps had he taken towards the front of the shop, when the clatter of feet upon



the pavement struck upon his ear, and ere many moments half a dozen men, headed by Prince Phalis, the son of the king, entered.

"Did not a female enter here a few moments since?" hastily asked Phalis, almost out of breath.

"My daughter, prince," returned Gio.

"Beshrew thy daughter. 'Tis another I seek, and she entered here."

"None that you can have occasion for. All beneath my roof are such as belong here."

"Now out upon thee, canting slave!" cried the exasperated prince. "Where are thy chambers?"

"They are beyond thy reach," returned the armorer, and his eyes flashed as he spoke. "I am a citizen of Tyre, and my chambers are sacred."

"Dost know who I am?"

"Ay; a son of him whom we call king."

"Then pass me to your inner dwelling, for search your house I will."

"You cannot."

"Now, by thy gods, no man dare beard me thus. Ha! boy, whence comest thou?"

"From my room," answered Abal, who had at that moment entered, and who deliberately closed the door behind him.

"And what left you behind?"

"My master's household," quickly answered Abal, not at all moved by the savage manner of the prince.

"The old viper and the young," ground out Phalis, between his clenched teeth. "Follow me, my men, and ere we leave the place we'll pull it down about their ears but we find the girl, for death be my master if I did not see her enter here. Come on."

"Back!" thundered Gio, as he caught a ponderous sledge that stood against his anvil and raised it above his head. "Back, I say. The king may come and search, and so may those officers who are justly authorized; but even though you



be a prince, and the son of our king, yet you pass not by force to the sanctuary of my home. Back! ”

“Hear the slave talk,” cried the prince; and yet he quailed before that uplifted weapon. “I am an officer, and second only to the king. Let me pass, or our swords shall find homes in your heart! ”

The armorer smiled a dark, grim smile, but he spoke not, nor did he move.

“Vile reptile, let me pass,” exclaimed the prince again, pointing his sword before him, and advancing a step. “Dare to strike, and ere the sun shall rise on to-morrow, your head shall leave your body.”

“And who shall do it? ”

“The executioner.”

“By whose authority? ”

“The king’s.”

“Beware! ” uttered Gio, with a strange emphasis. “Look to it, my prince, that you drag not your father into broils with the people. Strange scenes may follow if you do. Now tell me whom you seek? ”

“One who hath— But I’ll hold no converse further with thee. Back yourself, dog, or die! Theodoric, strike the babbler down! ”

It was a stout soldier whom the prince thus addressed, and one who held some favor with the king. Gio knew it, but yet he shrank not as the man came nearer.

“Theodoric, beware! ” fell from the armorer’s lips as the soldier approached.

“Beware yourself,” returned the hot-headed soldier; and as he spoke he sprang madly forward and made a furious lunge at the stout armorer.

The dark eyes of Gio flashed a single spark, and then his sledge descended upon the steel cap of his opponent. The bright metal sank beneath the blow, and the stout soldier fell without a groan. He was dead! Prince Phalis gazed for a moment upon the fallen man—a slight tremor moved his frame, and a pallor overspread his features.



“Prince,” said Gio, in a deep, meaning tone, “that blow was for the defence of my home. If needs be, I can strike another.”

“By all the powers of Pluto,” exclaimed Phalis, as he shook his bright sword above his head, “thy death shall follow this. On now, my men, and run him through. I will be the first.”

The armorer started back, and again he swung his ponderous weapon for its death stroke. The soldiers quailed, and the prince himself dared not advance.

“See, royal prince—the rabble are collecting about my door,” uttered Gio. “If you be wise you will order your men to take this body upon their shoulders and bear him off. Beware how you trample upon the rights of the people.”

“Come, come, prince,” urged one of the soldiers, as he plucked Phalis by the sleeve; “we must stay here no longer. The girl cannot leave the city, and as for this fellow, he shall be arrested on the morrow. See—the rabble increases, and anger rankles among them.”

“Then go we now,” said the prince, at length; “but”—he turned to Gio as he spoke—“you’d better be a creeping thing among the vipers of some crumbling ruin than be what now thou art, for thy dwelling shall be razed to its foundations, and thyself be put to a torturing death. Pol-lath and Byzantho, bear you the body to the nearest station. The rest will follow me.”

The prince trembled with rage while he spoke, and though he had gone so far for the attainment of the object he had in view, yet, for reasons which will be explained hereafter, he dared not now prosecute it further; so, after having seen the body of Theodoric borne from the place, he departed.

The crowd who had collected outside now came rushing into the artisan’s shop; but Gio evaded all their inquiries; and at length, by dint of persuasion, combined with a few threats, he cleared them out and closed his doors.

For some moments after the armorer was left alone with his boy, he stood in profound meditation. His huge fists



were clutched together like the jaws of his own vice, and the muscles in his arms and neck worked as though they would have broken from their confinement. At length he started up from his reverie, and bringing his right fist upon his breast with sledge like power, he growled forth to himself:—

“O Mapen, I would not sit upon your throne for the diadem of Persia. The wickedness of thyself and the lords shall ere long crush thee. There is a dark cloud gathering above your heads, and when its fury breaks upon Tyre the night shall be blacker than when the direful hosts of Nebuchadnezzar drove destruction through the ancient city and forced her people upon this island. Beware, oh, king! for even the meanest of thy subjects can feel like other men.”

“Gio,” said the boy, gazing with awe upon the form of his master, “shall we not flee from this place?”

“And wherefore?”

“The king—the prince.”

“They dare not molest me or mine. Phalis may threaten, but a citizen’s house is made sacred by our laws, and nought but a crime may subject me to even the intrusion of a civil posse. The prince led armed men upon me and I resisted. Let them do what they dare!”

“But may not she whom they pursued be a criminal?” asked Abal, in a modest tone.

“No, boy,” answered Gio, with a strange emotion. “That girl, weak and helpless as she seems, bears a charm upon her person that pales even a king. I dare go— But never mind; attend you now to the work I gave you, and I will seek the lady.”

Abal gazed after his master as he passed through the small door, and a half puzzled and half fearful expression rested upon his countenance as he commenced his work.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE FLIGHT.

WITHIN one of the chambers of Gio, pale and trembling, sat Marina, the daughter of Kison Ludim. She was a beautiful creature, tall and graceful, with the golden hair and blue eyes of her countrywomen, and some nineteen years had given their stamp of maturity to her woman's form and features. By her side, and gazing upon her with respectful deference, stood Esther, the only daughter of the armorer. They had heard the sound of contending voices, and the slight rattling of steel, but for a time all had been silent, and Marina feared the worst. A heavy footfall was heard from the passage—it ascended the steps. The fugitive turned more pale, and grasped the rude bench upon which she sat as though she would not be torn from it.

“Fear not,” said Esther, noticing the manner of the poor girl. “That’s my father’s step.”

And so it proved, for in a moment more Gio entered the apartment.

“Have they gone?” cried Marina, as she started up from her seat.

“Yes, they have,” returned Gio, gazing with fond respect upon her who had sought his protection. “You came opportunely to one who feared not your pursuers.”

“Oh, the gods be thanked!” murmured the fair girl. “And did you deny that I was here, good Gio?”

“I denied them nothing, save the entrance to my dwelling. One I killed—the rest went away.”

“Killed one! Then you too are undone,” replied Marina.

“Nay, fair daughter, I am not yet undone. But tell me—where did the prince attack you, and how?”



“In my own dwelling,” returned Marina. “Over an hour ago he called at my door and was admitted by the servants. He sent for me, and I obeyed his summons, thinking that if violence were offered me my people would protect me. He asked me to accompany him to his father’s palace, which I of course refused to do.”

“And why did you refuse?” asked Gio.

“Because the king had murdered my father, and I feared he meditated evil against me.”

“Thy father may not be murdered.”

“How! Not murdered!” uttered Marina.

“He may be, and he may not be. The king gave out that he died a natural death.”

“But we saw not his body. If he meant not to murder him, then why did he drag him from his home?”

“The king had his own reasons for that,” returned Gio, in a hopeful mood; “and perhaps he has murdered him; but I think your father would, for the present, be of more service to Mapen alive than dead. At all events, I will give you this piece of advice: Should you ever fall into the hands of the king, let not the belief in your father’s death influence you in giving way to his commands, neither let any threats of his move you to compliance.”

“Oh, sir! what thing is this you have in your mind? Do you—do you think my father lives?”

“I cannot say that I think Kison Ludim is living; but what I have said has been only given for the purpose I have stated—to warn you against surrendering to Mapen through such a fear. But tell me, did the prince use force in your dwelling?”

“Yes. When I refused to accompany him he called upon the soldiers he had outside, and as they rushed in my servants shrank away; then they seized me, and throwing a thick veil over my head, so that none might recognize me, they led me forth. When once in the street, I walked passively along till I came to the square next beyond here, and then, with all the strength I could command, I broke away



from my conductors and darted towards your shop. I knew if any one would succor me 'twould be the friend of Strato, for Strato's own house was too far off."

"You were right," returned Gio, with a sparkling eye; "but when you first entered I did not know you. However, you will be safe here till nightfall, and then I must seek for you a safer retreat. Young Strato shall know of your whereabouts."

At the mention of that name the rich blood flowed freely to the face of Marina, and for a moment her eyes were bent to the floor; but she soon looked up, and while a tear gathered in her eye, she said:—

"The gods will reward you for this, but I fear you will suffer."

"No, not so long as I can protect you. Were you once well within the power of the king I might then fall; but fear not for me. I will save you, because I know that Strato loves you and that you are his affianced bride. I love Strato, and thus will I serve him."

"But the king will surely send for you."

"Then let him send."

"And he will force you to give me up."

"He cannot."

"He may punish you for your disobedience with death."

"He dare not—at least, so long as I can keep you safely from him."

"But what is this mystery, Gio? What strange charm has thus been thrown around my person, that both the king and prince should think so much of securing me, and that even you rest your life upon the same possession?" inquired Marina.

"I do not rest my life solely upon that," replied Gio, betraying an evident desire to evade the direct question, "for I might be liberally rewarded for delivering you up. You need not tremble, for so long as I can hold you, you have nothing to fear. Now, Esther," continued the armorer, turning to his daughter, "go you and prepare



dresses for a disguise, both for yourself and Marina; for ere long we must set out, and you shall not only accompany her, but for the present, at least, you shall remain with her. I know of a place where you may both remain in safety. In the meantime, I will go and make such preparations as I can. Be speedy now, for the veil of night will soon be down upon our streets, and I would start ere the king's messengers can come upon us."

As Gio spoke he left the apartment, and in a moment more Esther went away to do her father's bidding, leaving Marina once more alone.

About a month previous to the opening of our tale Kison Ludim, an old noble of Tyre, had been sent by the king on business to Sidon, since which time he had not been seen by his friends. Mapen had given out that the old man had been lost at sea, and though none could contradict the statement, yet a few of the people felt sure that the king had some cause of fear in connection with the missing noble, so that, even had such a catastrophe actually transpired, some thought that his death had been brought about by premeditation on the king's part. What the king could have had against the old noble few could comprehend, and even those few, if we except Gio, the king, and Prince Phalis, knew not the secret, though they did know one thing; they knew that the king had asked of Kison Ludim the hand of his daughter for the prince, and that that request had been denied to the monarch, simply for the reason that Marina had already been solemnly affianced to young Strato. The king was of course angry at this peremptory refusal of his royal wish, and ere long the presumptuous father of the wished-for maiden was sent on his mission to Sidon; from which mission he had not returned.

In the meantime, the fair Marina had been left unmolested in charge of her father's house and servants, and not until the present time had any demonstration on the part of the king in favor of his project been made; but now, he would gain by force what he had failed to obtain by persuasion.



At length night fell down upon the city, and Esther arrayed Marina and herself in the garbs of fisher girls, while Gio, attired as a rough boatman, and wearing a heavy sword concealed beneath his frock, led the way out from his dwelling by way of the roof, and passing along under the shade of the high brick parapets of the neighboring buildings, the party kept on till they reached a flight of stone steps that led down against the northern wall of the city.

"Here you must remain for a few moments," said Gio, "while I go down and see if the way is clear. Keep low behind this small turret till I return."

"You will not be gone long?" urged Marina, in a trembling tone, while she pulled her dress more closely about her, as she felt the cool breeze that came sweeping up the sea.

"No. The small harbor is only a few steps from here."

"What? And do you mean to take me from the city?" asked the fair fugitive, in some surprise.

"Most certainly," returned Gio. "There is surely no safety for you here. Do you hesitate?"

It was some moments before Marina answered. She bent her head in thought, and seemed troubled.

"It seems hard that I should have to flee the city," she at length murmured. "I who have done no one wrong."

"Ay, it is hard, lady; but it is nevertheless necessary."

"Why—oh, why must I leave my father's house? Who will take care of his property?"

"Would you go back to your father's house now?"

"No, no; not now. But"—

"But what?" said the armorer, as the girl hesitated.

"Alas, sir, I hardly know! I would seek safety, but must I do it thus?"

"If you go with me, I will swear that you shall be safe; but to remain in the city would be dangerous."

"But the prince may give over his persecution."

"He will not, lady."

"Why should he seek to make me his wife? He cannot have seen me to love me, and both he and the king know



that I am already affianced. Indeed, his very conduct to-day is proof that he bears me no love."

"Marina," returned Gio, in a somewhat anxious manner, "we cannot remain long here to parley; but of three things let me assure you: First, the prince will seek your hand, even though it be at the risk of his life, and no means will he leave untried to reach that end. Second, if you remain in the city he will certainly find you, and when he seeks you again, he will do it with a posse of officers who may not be resisted. Third, if you go with me, you shall be safe, and Strato shall know of your whereabouts."

"I will go—I will go," quickly returned Marina. "But tell me of one thing more; how long shall I have to stay?"

A fierce fire glowed in the eyes of the powerful armorer, and his hands were clutched with nervous life. With an instinctive movement he cast his glance about over the towering turrets and spires of the city—then a dark smile passed over his features, and in a hushed, premonitory tone, he uttered:—

"Not long; perhaps till the waning of another moon—perhaps longer; but when you do return, you shall be safe. Remain here now till I return."

As Gio spoke he turned away and descended the steps. Marina watched him till he turned the angle of the building, and then she laid her head upon Esther's bosom.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE PURSUIT AND THE SEASIDE CONFLICT.

FOR nearly half an hour the two girls remained alone upon the house-top where their conductor had left them. A few stars glittered in the heavens, but they hardly had power to relieve the darkness that dwelt over the scene, though for all that the eye could reach to some distance over the gently swelling bosom of the Mediterranean. The air was laden with a heavy dew, and as Marina shrank beneath the chill moisture she began to be alarmed at the protracted absence of Gio.

“Fear not,” urged Esther, as she felt the hand of her companion tremble; “my father will surely return.”

“But why does he stay so long?”

“Perhaps he finds it difficult to procure a boat.”

“But may he not find it difficult to obtain a pass out from the city?” suggested Marina, with a shudder.

“No, that cannot be, for no citizen can be stopped, except by special edict.”

“But your father is in disguise.”

“It makes no difference,” returned Esther, drawing her arm more closely about the form of her companion; “either as a fisherman of the coast or as a Tyrian citizen he can pass. But hark! What noise is that below?”

“Oh, the gods protect us!”

“It comes from my father’s house,” uttered Esther.

“Then we are lost! We are pursued!” ejaculated Marina.

Esther placed her hand upon the parapet and looked over into the space below. Nothing but the opposite wall and the stairs were to be seen. The sounds that had arrested her attention, as she listened more carefully, indeed came from



the direction of her own dwelling, and she had no hesitation in deciding that officers were endeavoring to gain admittance. She was upon the point of speaking, when a hurried footfall broke the air, and the half-formed words were changed to an exclamation of relief as she recognized the steps of her father.

“Quick! quick!” exclaimed Gio, as he came bounding up the stairs. “There’s not a moment to be lost. The king has issued an order for my arrest, and also of all within my house. But hurry, and we have yet time, for the officers are still thumping at my door,” he added, quickly.

The armorer took Marina by the hand and led her down the stairs, while Esther followed closely behind. When they reached the street Gio stopped for an instant to listen, and then turning to the right he glided swiftly along under cover of the wall.

“Hasten, hasten,” he urged, at the same time half lifting Marina from the pavement. “They have started on again, and some of them come this way.”

Marina needed no urging, however, for her ears caught the sound of the pursuers, and with a fleet step she kept by the side of her conductor. At length they reached the gate that led out to the small harbor, where, within a small arched alcove, stood a mailed soldier, armed with a heavy spear and a buckler, while near by him, within a perforated block of wood, stood some dozen light javelins.

“Who would pass?” said the sentry, stepping forward.

“The same who was here but now after his boat,” confidently returned Gio.

“But these girls?”

“Both my daughters.”

“They cannot pass.”

“Cannot? They must.”

“I say they cannot.”

“And why?”

“We have orders from the king to allow no female to pass out from the city.”



“ Fool! that order relates only to those who belong within your walls. Do you not know the difference between the poor fisher-girls of the coast, and the females of Tyre ? ”

“ I should be a fool to break the orders of my superiors.”

“ You will be a greater fool if you detain us. See you not that it is already late? Come, let us pass.”

“ What, father,” exclaimed Esther, in well feigned astonishment, “ does the man think we belong in the city ? ”

“ Ay, so he pretends; but come, he will not detain us longer, for I give him credit for more sense.”

The stout heart of Gio trembled slightly, as he heard the near and still nearer approach of the pursuers, for in his haste to make sure of the boat, he had not thought of providing for the emergency that had thus arisen in his way. But pass he must, even though the sentry had to be overcome by force, for he had set his life against the wicked plan of the king, and he would not now be baulked by a hireling arm. As he spoke he pushed both the girls ahead of him within the portal, and then turning to the soldier, he continued:—

“ Of course you will not detain us ? ”

“ I must detain the girls,” firmly replied the sentry, as he lowered the point of his spear.

“ Very well—then be it so,” uttered Gio, with his lips almost closed. “ Come you back, my children.”

The soldier took this all in good faith, and raising the point of his weapon, he started as though he would have stepped back, when Gio, with a single bound, caught him in his powerful embrace, and dashed down through the gate towards the water.

“ Follow, follow! ” he shouted to the girls, and on the next moment he had hurled the ill-fated sentry into the water.

Close at hand was a small boat pulling only two oars, and into this Gio at once hastened Marina and Esther, and then casting off the painter he leaped in himself, seized the oars, and darted off. Just as he cleared the landing-steps, he had the satisfaction of seeing the soused sentry clamber



safely out of his bath, but ere the latter could reach his javelins—for which weapons he at once made his way—the object of his wrath was skipping over the water far out of his reach.

It was too dark to distinguish objects upon the landing from the point Gio had now reached, but yet he knew from the sounds that came through the air that his pursuers had arrived at the gate; for amid various oaths and execrations he could hear hurried calls for a boat, and he knew, too, that the dip of his own oar-blades could be distinctly made out by those upon the shore.

“They are preparing to follow us,” muttered he, as he leaned further back at his oars.

“But they can’t overtake us now,” hopefully remarked Esther.

“I don’t know. There are some swift barges at the landing, and if they have hands enough to man the oars, they may yet give us a hard pull.”

For a few moments nothing more was said, but at length Esther remarked:—

“Surely I see not how they could have tracked us thus, for no one could have seen us coming over the houses.”

“Simple enough,” returned Gio. “There were two parties of them when they left our house, and of course one of them would naturally start for that gate. Ah, there starts a barge!”

A heavy plash of oars at the landing was now plainly heard, and Gio set himself more firmly to his task. He had only a quarter of a mile to clear, but even that gave him more time upon the water than he desired. The sweat rolled from his brow in trinkling streams, and his broad chest heaved beneath the exertion he was putting forth. Esther and Marina sat together in the stern of the boat, where they watched with anxious gaze their stout guardian, and ever and anon they would cast their eyes back towards the point from whence they had come. One furlong only now lay between them and the shore, but the dim outlines of



the barge could be plainly distinguished through the gloom, and the dusky forms of her oarsmen loomed up above her bows. Ahead, the shore stretched along with its clear line of white, breaking foam, beyond which lay the goal.

"Esther," said Gio, as the barge came nearer, "stand up, and see if you can count the number of our pursuers?"

The girl placed her hand upon Marina's shoulder for support, and after gazing in the given direction for a few moments, she replied:—

"I can see them distinctly. There are seven—six at the oars, and one steering."

The armorer made no further remark, but with a few more strokes his boat slid high up on the sand.

"Now for your lives!" he shouted. "Leap! Mind not the water."

Esther caught Marina by the hand and jumped from the boat. The barge had already struck upon the sand, but her depth was such that she remained yet some ten or fifteen feet from the shore.

"Run, run!" cried Gio. "Keep the shore, and stop not till you reach that tall pillar that stands nearest the sea."

The girls obeyed, and while yet he had been speaking the armorer had leaped back to where the sea had thrown up a long line of rocks, and snatching up two of such a size as he could wield with precision, he stood his ground. One of them he hurled with all his might at the head of his nearest pursuer, and he had the satisfaction of seeing his mark sink beneath the deadly missile. This was a game Gio had often played, and in all Tyre he had not his match at stoning.

The advancing party stopped an instant as one of their number thus unexpectedly fell, but ere they exactly realized the cause, another met the same fate.

"By the great Apollo," cried one of the soldiers, "the fisherman is stoning us!"

"Stand back," shouted Gio, as the men started to rush forward, at the same time drawing his heavy sword; "he who opposes me rushes upon his own death!"



"Ye gods! 'tis no fisherman. 'Tis Gio, as I'm alive!" exclaimed the foremost of the assailants.

"'Tis Gio," returned the armorer; "and ye who know him best will best know how to act."

If there was one man above another whom the soldiers of Tyre respected and loved, that man was Gio, their unrivaled armorer, and more than that, none knew better how to use the weapons he made than he himself. Now, howsoever brave a man may be, there is something experienced in coming in contact with a universally acknowledged superior, that may never be felt in any other contest, and more especially when that superior is one in whose superiority you have ever felt a pride.

With these feelings the soldiers hesitated, and the officer who stood foremost spoke:—

"Gio," said he, "we are all officers of justice now, for we hold a warrant from the king for your own arrest and also that of the daughter of Kison Ludim, so you see we must take you. You have already slain two of our number, but of course further resistance will be useless. One of those was the fair Marina, I think, who started off along the shore?"

"It was," returned Gio; "and I have sworn to protect her with my life."

"But we must obey the king."

"And I must keep my oath."

"Then you will not surrender?"

"Never!"

"Then your blood be upon your own head."

During this colloquy Gio had been gradually working his way between the soldiers and the point towards which the girls had fled. There were now five opposed to him, and he had some doubts about being able to cope safely with them all. For a single moment he considered, and then turning suddenly about, he ran with all his might towards the point where the top of a towering marble pillar was pictured against the sky. The king's messengers were somewhat



taken aback by this movement, but quickly recovering themselves they followed in pursuit; but Gio outran them at such a rate that in a few moments he was lost to them in the darkness.

The armorer had a point in view other than to run away, for no sooner did he ascertain that the night had dropped its veil between himself and his pursuers, than he turned short to the left, and ensconced himself behind a heap of mouldering ruins, where he armed himself with two large, sharp angled stones, and awaited the approach of the unsuspecting soldier officers.

At length they came puffing along. Gio rose to a most favorable posture, and as soon as he was sure of his mark, he hurled forth one of his missiles. A man fell upon the sands. Again the party stopped in consternation, and another fell. There were now three left, and again drawing his sword the armorer sprang forward quickly.

“Now stay your steps, and live!” shouted he, in tones that turned to the roar of the roused lion. “I fight for innocence against the wiles of wickedness; and were there ten thousand kings against me, they should take me or my charge only after I was dead. Back! Who dies first? Which of ye wishes it, let him advance but a single step and the fate is his!”

“Gio,” said one of the soldiers, while he recoiled a step, “you know that from this moment your life is forfeited. Deliver up to us the Lady Marina, and the king will give to you a free pardon.”

The armorer laughed a bitter laugh as the man thus spoke, but in a moment more he advanced a step, and raising his ponderous sword, he uttered:—

“Back to your boat, and if the king wants me, let him take me, and let me tell you this: were I now alone I would go with you a prisoner to the king; but the daughter of Kison Ludim he cannot have. That is enough. Now turn.”

“By the great Olympus!” cried he of the soldiers who had before spoken; “we might as well die here, as to die by



the hands of the executioner, for Mapen will not brook such cowardly defeat. Will you follow me?"

"Yes," returned his two companions.

"Then brace your swords, and on!"

The moment these words left the speaker's lips, Gio dashed like a tiger upon his opponents. He waited not for their onset, but he made it himself, and at the first stroke one of his antagonists fell. The two remaining soldiers shrank not back now, for they had entered the den and they dared not turn. They struck at the armorer, but one sword he dodged, and the other he broke—then he of the broken sword fell. The solitary soldier leaped quickly back crying for quarters.

"Take your life and go," returned Gio, as he dropped the point of his weapon, "and if you reach the king, tell him how fared your party; and tell him too, that he can find me any time after to-morrow."

"I shall not go to Tyre again," returned the soldier. "Anywhere in Phœnicia I can find quarters, but to return would be sure death!"

"As you please," said Gio, "only mind that you follow not me."

With these words the armorer turned and followed in the steps of the girls, leaving the lone soldier to dispose of himself as he might think proper.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE RUINED TEMPLE. THE PRIEST OF HERCULES.

DURING the time that Gio had been engaged against his pursuers, the moon had been gradually rising, and as the fleecy clouds began to fly away, surrounding, and even distant, objects fell upon the sight. In the distance, upon its rock-bound island, lay the sleeping city of Tyre, with the moonbeams just dancing upon its marble walls and gilded spires, while far away beyond lay the widespread sea. But on the shore where parted the armorer and the soldier, stretching back to the distance of a mile, was spread out a scene of peculiar interest. Burnt and blackened walls, cracked and tumbling, and toppling upon their foundations—huge columns of marble and granite standing against the sky, and others lying along on the brick and mortar strewn ground, fell upon the right in strange confusion. Here and there some massive temple, which the destroyer had not been able to touch, still maintained its sacred front, though the wild vine and green moss had been slowly creeping over it. Occasionally, as the eye swept the scene, a fisherman's hut would obtrude itself, showing that amid the crumbling relics of the past humanity still held its home.

Here lay old Tyre, and as she thus dwelt within the solemnity of the memories that clung to her decaying monuments, she presented a strange contrast to the city of her children that now stood in magnificent power upon the opposite isle.

Oh, what a grandeur there is in the speaking stones of ancient ruins! The smooth, unlettered marble speaks a language peculiarly its own—a language made powerful from its very mysterious silence. The fallen walls are nothing

but carved and fashioned stones, but oh, what sacred memories cling about them, and what thrilling tales have been whispered in their now locked-up ears. But above all, they tell to us in thunder tones the solemn truth, earthly power hangs only upon fading, ending moments; and from the decay of mortality and its works, the mind irresistibly wanders away to that God with whom alone dwells all that can outlast destroying Time.

Upon a bank formed by the soft moss that had grown over a thick slab, just at the foot of a towering column, sat the fair Marina and the faithful Esther. Words may have passed between them, but now they seemed to rest in silent anxiety, for they had sat there long, and waited for their guide, and now that the moon had risen, and he came not, they began to feel anxious, for the bright beams would ere long reveal them to any one who might be passing that way.

At length, as they had almost become chilled through by the damp coolness of the atmosphere, they were startled from their anxiety by the appearance of Gio, and with a simultaneous cry of delight, they both sprang to their feet.

"You are not hurt, father?" exclaimed Esther, as she laid her hand affectionately upon his arm.

"No, no, child."

"But how did you escape them?"

"Who?"

"The men in the barge."

"Never mind, Esther," answered the armorer, with a shudder; "suffice it for you to know that I am safe, and that in my own safety you, too, are safe."

"But I thought I heard the clang of steel for a moment just before you came."

"Have you not heard it oft in my shop?"

"Yes, father."

"Then the clang was to some purpose. Come, follow me, for the point of our destination lies not far from here."

Thus saying, Gio turned his steps to the left around the huge pillar, and struck off through a labyrinth of fluted



columns, which appeared to have once supported the arcade that surrounded an extensive piazza. When he had passed these, the way opened to a narrow street, which he followed to the right for a few steps, and then crossing again to the left he passed through a wide aperture in a massive marble wall, beyond which was a widespread scene of magnificent desolation. Huge slabs, prostrate columns, broken vases, shafts, and capitals; elaborately ornamented architraves, friezes, and cornices, with here and there long rows of marble seats, and nearly in the centre of all, a huge porphyry pedestal, marked the spot as one of more than common note. Here, in fact, had stood the vast temple of Hercules, that god being the titular deity of the Tyrians. Upon the pedestal just mentioned, once stood the famous oracle of Hercules (a temple and oracle of the same name were now in the island city), and now here, Gio stopped and gazed about him as if to assure himself that no watchers were near.

"Here we wait for one who will give us conduct," said the armorer; "and one against whose power even Mapen dare not raise a single jewel of his crown."

As Gio spoke, he stamped thrice with his heavy foot upon the Mosaic pavement where he stood, and while yet the girls waited curiously for the result of this strange movement, a low rumbling was heard beneath them, and in a moment more the huge mass that formed the pedestal moved some three feet, with a sort of rotary motion, from the place where it stood; then a wide slab was lifted till its edge leaned against the removed body, and as Marina started back in wonder, a human being ascended and stood by them. It was a man as tall and powerful as was Gio himself, and evidently disguised, for his form was enveloped in a sort of capacious toga, and a long strip of white cloth was drawn around his head and passed twice around under the chin, thereby leaving only the centre of the face visible.

"I've waited for you," said this strange appearance.

"I've come as quickly as possible," returned Gio.

"Well, never mind; come down."

Gio took Marina by the hand and followed the new guide down the marble steps which had been revealed by the removal of the pedestal, Esther bringing up the rear. The apartment thus arrived at was quite capacious, and fitted up in a style of splendor quite remarkable, to say the least, and from the various symbols that adorned the walls and columns it must have been, during the being of the vast temple above, a secret resort of the priests of the oracle.

"Here, my daughters," said the stranger, "you can remain in peace and safety. Here are provisions in plenty, and every night you will be visited by a servant who will attend to your wants, and supply your lamp with oil."

While the man was speaking, he removed the bandage from his head and face, and in so doing he revealed a flowing white beard and hair. Marina gazed for a moment upon him, and then clasping her hands together, she fell upon her knees and bent her head forward towards the pavement.

She was in the presence of Balbec, the chief priest of the temple of Hercules, a man than whom none other was more honored, and at the same time more feared, in all Tyre.

"Arise, child," said Balbec, as he extended his hand to assist her; "you have nothing to fear. It may seem strange that I should thus leave my sacred office to aid thee, but the gods have so willed it and I must obey."

"Oh, what strange fate is mine?" murmured Marina, as she gazed with trembling awe up into the face of the all-powerful priest.

"Thy fate is yet hidden, my child," returned he; "but the destiny is cast, nevertheless."

"Then read it to me. Let me know the end of all this," urged Marina, in anxious tones.

"Nay, nay," said Balbec. "Though the gods of our people reveal to their chosen servants some of the future, yet the Universal God to whom all other gods do homage, has made mortals after his own will and purpose, and from them he hides what he sees fit. For thine own happiness seek not too deeply into the future."



“Forgive me, if I have sinned,” ejaculated Marina. “To you, in whom all Tyre trusts, I may safely look with confidence. But I shall not be confined here long?”

“My child,” returned the chief priest, “there is a dark storm-cloud rising over Tyre. That storm shall ere long burst, and when its fury has passed away you shall return to your home. Seek no more.”

Strange and mysterious felt the daughter of Ludim. She knew that she lived and moved, but wherefore she knew not. Strange results were hanging upon her destiny, and momentous events were linked with her future. She felt herself to be in the hands of a power she could neither withstand nor comprehend. The heir of the Tyrian crown and sceptre had sought her hand, and he would have forced her to become his bride. The king, too, aimed at the same end, and to escape them both, she had given herself into the care of him who had brought her hither. Why was all this? Why had her father been removed, except that she might become a more easy prey to the unaccountable desire of the king? All, all, was as dark and inexplicable as the centre of high Olympus, and she found that she might have as well tried to pass through the adamantine barriers of the resistless mount, as to further seek a solution to the mysteries that enveloped her.

“Come, Gio,” said Balbec, as he wound the wide coif once more about his head; “it is time that we were going.”

“You speak truly, Balbec,” returned the armorer; and then turning to the two girls, he assured them that they had nothing to fear, and that their wants should be well cared for.

“And you, Esther,” he continued, “will serve your companion as she may desire, for the time may come when you will thank me for giving you the office.”

“I thank you already,” said Esther, with sparkling eyes; “for it is a pleasure to me thus to serve one who both deserves and needs it.”

Gio thanked his child with a kiss, and Marina then threw her arms about her kind friend’s neck. This little sunbeam

of sympathy illuminated somewhat the darkness before the poor fugitive, for while the light of a pure friendship was in her path she had at least something worth living for.

Shortly afterwards, Balbec and Gio bade the girls once more to be of good cheer, and then ascending the steps they passed out upon the pavement above. By a means known only to those two men who now stood there, the pedestal was moved back to its place, and then they turned towards the sea. None save themselves knew of the strange connection that existed between the high chief priest of the great Tyrian temple and the stalwart armorer of Tyre,—one standing as the “chiefest” man of all the city, in that he was the sacred interpreter of the gods, and the chosen servant of Hercules—the other but a simple artisan, who labored humbly and hard for his daily bread.

Balbec and Gio gained the boat, and put forth for the island; but when they entered the city it was by the southern gate, when a simple word from the former gave them instant passage by the sentinel.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE PRISONER.

UPON a slightly raised throne of ivory, inlaid with gold and precious stones, sat Mapen, King of Tyre. By his side stood Prince Phalis, over whose features the marks of dissipation had already been plainly laid. A few steps in front of the throne stood the sentinel who had been on post at the northern gate on the previous evening, and around him were a dozen soldiers, while back of the throne were ranged in the most exact order a score of attendants.

The king's countenance was dark and lowering, and as he clutched with nervous grip the hilt of a small dagger that was confined within his jeweled girdle, one might have seen that an emotion of more than ordinary import was rankling his soul. The soldiers stood trembling before the monarch, and as they met his flashing glances, they cowered as before some raving beast.

"Slave!" cried the king, addressing the afore-mentioned sentinel, who stood cringing like a whipped cur, "was it by your post that these people passed?"

"A man and two girls, sire."

"And had you not arms?"

"I had, sire; but the man was powerful, and he seized me unawares. I stoutly refused the girls passage, but he overcame me. I know now that it must have been the armorer, for no other man in Tyre could have done what he did."

"Then the man and the girls put off from your landing?"

"Yes, sire—towards the coast."

"And were they not almost immediately followed?"

"Yes, sire, by seven of your soldiers."

“Phalis,” continued the king, turning to his son, “have you sent messengers to the coast?”

“Yes,” returned the prince. “I sent them early this morning. They should have returned by this time.”

“Then we will wait for them,” said Mapen. And then turning to one of the officers who had command of the soldiers, he continued:—

“Now take that vile slave away and confine him. We will consider whether his life be worth the saving.”

As the king thus spoke, the poor sentinel was led away. He knew Mapen too well to think of asking for pardon, or to attempt further explanation, for he knew that the simplest circumstances might decide his fate.

For some time after the culprit was led away, a strict silence was maintained about the throne; but at length a sudden stir was heard without, and in a moment more a messenger rushed breathlessly into the royal presence.

“How now, sirrah?” exclaimed the king. “Are you one who has been upon the coast this morning?”

“I am, sire.”

“And found you the soldiers who went thither last night?”

“All but one,” returned the messenger, trembling with the weight of the fearful news he bore.

“Ha! and why have they not returned? Do they still search for the fugitives?”

“They are dead, sire.”

“Dead!” iterated the king, springing from his throne, and grasping the speaker by the arm. “Did I understand thee aright? Dead, saidst thou?”

“Ease thy hold, sire, and I will tell thee all I saw.”

“Speak, then, and do it quickly.”

“Near the spot where both the pursued and the pursuers must have landed—for we found the barge still fast in the sand—lay two of the soldiers stretched out upon the sand. They had been slain by stones. Further on to the southward we found more of them dead. Two of these, also, had



been slain with stones, and the other two by the sword. The seventh was nowhere to be found, nor could we find the least traces beyond there of the fugitives, though we searched for over an hour."

"Then the villain must have had accomplices," shouted the king, as he started nervously across the marble pavement of his divan.

"No, sire," returned the messenger. "The soldiers had but one opponent, for the footprints in the sand were plain."

"Think not strange of this, my royal father," said Phalis. "Gio is a man not to be easily overcome. Not only is he powerful in the extreme, but he is the best stone and sword player in Tyre."

"And who is this Gio? this man who puffs at my authority as though it were a candle which he might extinguish?"

"You know him well, father; the old armorer of Tyre, and for so long a friend and follower of young Strato."

"Strato, again!" uttered the king, suddenly starting as he heard the name.

Over the face of the monarch there came a still darker cloud, but in a moment it passed away, and a grim, savage smile took its place. Two or three times he strode up and down the apartment, and then coming near to the prince, he uttered:—

"By the gods, Phalis, we will crush the viper beneath our feet. This Gio is Strato's friend—Strato stands between us and the daughter of Kison Ludim—Gio defies our royal will—Strato urges him on—Strato shall be seized!"

"Good, father," returned Phalis, with sparkling eyes. "The pretext is warrantable. Surely the armorer would not have done this without urging from some one higher than himself. But we must be wary, for young Strato is the generally beloved of all the merchants, and 'twould be unsafe to estrange their wealth from the royal support."

"Leave that to me," said Mapen, in a confident tone; "for I will make out a case against him of so firm a mould that even an Argus could not pick an objection against it."

Again the king strode across the divan, and stopping near the messenger, he said:—

“ You say you found the tracks plain in the sand ? ”

“ Yes, sire.”

“ And of the two girls ? ”

“ We did.”

“ And could you not trace them ? ”

“ Only to where they became lost among the tall grass and moss of the ruins.”

“ Oh, that the dog of an armorer would but once more show his face in Tyre,” exclaimed the monarch, striking his hands together with savage vehemence.

“ Your majesty,” said one of the soldiers who had followed the messenger into the apartment, “ I saw the armorer this morning.”

“ How, slave—this morning ? ”

“ Yes, sire.”

“ Where ? ”

“ In his shop, at work.”

“ Now, slave, thou liest! The dog would not dare thus to beard me.”

“ I speak soberly, and that which I know,” confidently returned the soldier.

“ And you saw Gio in his shop this morning ? ”

“ Most assuredly I did, sire.”

“ Then,” cried the king, turning red, and trembling with rage, “ he shall find how a king can be revenged. Phalis, take you a guard and go to the armorer’s shop. If he be in, capture him and bring him here. Take javelins with you, and slay him if he offers the least resistance. Away now, and let me not wait long for your return, for till he be within my power I rest upon sharp, angry thorns.”

With quick, eager movements the prince prepared for his expedition, and ere long, at the head of twenty men he set out.

Gio had indeed gone to work in his shop, and as he hammered away upon his anvil no one could have mistrusted



from his manner that aught unusual had happened. His boy was at the bellows, and as the bright sparks flew out from beneath the heavy hammer, the stout man seemed to forget that any other occupation had called him lately away from his forge.

"I think you'll be called for to-day," remarked the boy, as Gio plunged the pike-head he was fashioning once more into the fire.

"I expect so," quietly returned the armorer, while a faint smile passed over his features. "But speak you from your own reason, Abal, or from what you have seen?"

"From what I have seen, good master. Last night's affairs were enough, for when I let the soldiers into the house so that they should not batter down the doors, they ran about like wild men; and when they left they assured me that you would never dare show your face here again."

"Is that all?"

"No, it is not. Soldiers have looked in here upon you this morning, and then they hastened away towards the king's palace."

Again Gio smiled, and drawing the pike-head from the fire, he drew down its point beneath his hammer. While he was at work, his doors were suddenly darkened, and on raising his head he beheld Prince Phalis and his soldiers.

"Ah, royal prince, I give you a good-day," said the armorer, in a half condescending tone and manner.

"I have come to give you a better one," returned Phalis, in a bitter tone. "You are my prisoner."

"Aha—say you so?"

"Dead, or alive, you go with me. Now which do you prefer?"

"Oh, alive, by all means," returned Gio, as he deliberately dipped the end of the pike into the water that was near him, and then watched the varying colors as they came and went upon the surface of the steel.

"Then prepare to accompany me to the palace," said the prince, surprised at the utter coolness of the armorer.

"Let me catch this temper first," returned Gio, without raising his eyes from the pointed steel. "One moment—hold—blue—ah! that's it. Now, sir I will be with you in a moment."

From the armorer's movements, Phalis seemed to fear that he was laying some plan for escape, and he drew his own javelin, and his followers did the same; but Gio thought of no such thing, for he turned quietly to where stood his wash-basin, and having performed his ablution, he arranged his apparel, and then informed the prince that he was ready to accompany him.

"Abal," he continued, turning to his boy, "if I do not return before dark, you may secure the doors and retire; but I shall be here early in the morning, at all events."

"Don't be too sure of that," uttered the prince, in a meaning tone.

"Remember," added Gio, without seeming to notice the words of Phalis, "have all prepared for morning, for I will surely be here."

"We shall see," said the prince, as he made a motion for his men to advance and surround the prisoner.

"So we shall," returned Gio, with another of his peculiar smiles. "But come, sirs, I am ready for the palace."

Phalis set forward with his prisoner, but shortly after he entered the street he began to find that had the armorer a mind to escape, it would have taken a greater force than his to have prevented, for on all hands the people began to collect, and though they spoke not openly in words, yet their gestures plainly evinced that they not only knew that Gio was a prisoner, but that they would dare even to rescue him should he give the signal. From house tops, and from curtained windows, from behind garden wall and from half-closed doors, came hisses and groans, and more than once the prince heard his own name used in connection with epithets anything but agreeable.

"Be not alarmed, prince," said Gio, as he noticed Phalis' fear, "those are but poor subjects of your father's crown."



“But, by my father’s sceptre,” hissed the prince, seeming hardly to know at which to be the most exasperated, the sound that met his ears from the covers around, or the cool effrontery of his prisoner, “they shall suffer for this.”

Once more Gio laughed in his own peculiar way, but he spoke not further. Phalis gazed at the working features of the armorer, and wondered what feelings could thus move him in view of the sure fate that awaited him.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### A STRANGE INTERVENTION.

MAPEN was waiting anxiously for the arrival of those who had been sent after the armorer. Part of the time he had been lounging upon his throne, and then he had walked nervously and hurriedly up and down the divan. The thoughts of Gio alone had not the power to move the king as he was now moved, nor had the simple fact that the daughter of Kison Ludim had escaped him. The immediate circumstances connected with these two persons might have irritated him, even to madness, but they could not have so utterly roused the maniac within him. There was a hidden cause; a deep, unfathomable mystery, that cast its black pall over the future, and Marina, the fair daughter of the murdered noble, was imaged forth in the vista.

Again and again the monarch turned in his walk, and amid the incoherent mutterings that fell from his lips, there

was an occasional casting of the eyes upward, as though he feared that Heaven was frowning upon him, too. At length the sound of many feet upon the broad stairs that led to the divan fell upon his ears, and starting back towards his ivory throne he waited for the visitation. The first who entered was the prince, and next came Gio.

The armorer slowly advanced towards the throne, folded his arms across his huge breast, then bent upon the king a stern, proud look, and said:—

“Sire, I await your pleasure.”

Mapen started further back upon his throne as he met the gaze of the prisoner, for he was not a little struck with the boldness of his manner; but in a moment a sense of his own royal power came to his aid, and in a tone made calm by his very effort to suppress his rising passion, he said:—

“Vile slave”——

“I am a citizen, sire,” calmly interrupted the armorer.

“From this moment you are the lowest of slaves!” cried the king. “Last night you wrested a fugitive from my officers.”

“You mistake, sire.”

“Did you not secrete the daughter of Kison Ludim?”

“She sought refuge in my house, and I gave it to her.”

“Ay, and you openly resisted a prince of the realm and his officers.”

“I resisted a rabble who chased the poor frightened girl to my shop, sire; but under such circumstances I know no distinction of men. It was threatened innocence seeking an asylum, and the gods smiled when I gave it.”

“By Jupiter, thou hadst better beware of thy tongue.”

“And thou of thy— But never mind, go on.”

The king gazed a moment upon the powerful man in silence. A variety of conflicting emotions stirred within him, and more than once the color forsook his cheek, but at length he said:—

“You knew that your king desired the presence of the Lady Marina?”



“ I knew nothing, save that I swore to protect her.”

“ Ha! and to whom didst thou swear it ? ”

“ To the lady herself.”

“ And to no one else ? ”

“ No.”

“ You slew Theodoric ? ”

“ Ay.”

“ And threatened the prince ? ”

“ I advised the prince.”

“ Did you not convey Marina out of the city last night ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And assault the sentinel on his post ? ”

“ I threw him overboard.”

“ Did you not meet the officers whom I sent after you ? ”

“ I did, sire.”

“ And did they not tell you that they came with power from me ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Then how met you their demands ? ”

“ As the true man ever meets a demand to surrender his rights and the liberties of those whom he has sworn to protect. I fought them, and all but one I slew, and to him I gave quarters.”

“ And the lady—where is she ? ”

“ Where you can never find her.”

“ Now mark me, Gio,” said the king, in a deep, meaning tone, as he arose from his throne and took a step forward, “ your life depends upon your answer. If you will give up to me the Lady Marina, I will swear to overlook your crimes thus far, and restore you to liberty.”

“ Mapen,” returned the armorer, raising himself to his full height, while his eyes flashed and sparkled with the proud spirit that moved within, “ I will not deliver her up.”

“ Then, by the immortal Hercules, you die ! ” exclaimed the monarch, sinking back upon his throne.

“ What would that benefit you ? ” asked Gio, in a strangely sounding voice.

“Revenge!” hissed the king.

“Few persons are so bold as to risk life, and even a crown, for mere revenge,” fell in quiet tones from Gio’s lips.

Mapen turned pale as these words fell upon his ears, and twice, as he attempted to speak, the words were forced back. At length, however, with less anger, but more of anxiety, he said:—

“I have given you my word, and you may depend upon it. If you do not deliver up the girl you die.”

“Let me tell you one thing, sire, ere you fully make up your mind. I am not the only one who knows where Marina is, and when I am missing she will have another protector, and”—here Gio bent forward and spoke so low as only to be heard by the king—“she may marry whom she chooses.”

“Ha! how guessed you that secret?” cried Mapen, starting up again from his seat, and looking earnestly in the face of the prisoner.

“I have not guessed it, sire; I know it. Beware how you tempt the gods.”

For full five minutes the monarch gazed fixedly upon the calm face of the stalwart armorer. At the end of that time he made a motion for all the soldiers to leave the divan, and then turning to his attendants, he bade them stand further back from the throne. The prince alone remained within hearing, and even he wondered at the sudden change that had come over his father’s countenance.

“Gio,” said the king, in an earnest, persuasive tone, “you know then the secret that lies in the destiny of Lady Marina?”

“I do, sire.”

“And will you not give her up to me?”

“I cannot.”

“I will make you rich.”

“I cannot.”

“You shall have honors.”

“You have my answer.”



“You shall stand next to the prince himself in the kingdom.”

“Not for your crown itself would I resign her to you.”

“And to abide by these answers you are unalterably fixed?”

“As Persia is by her laws.”

“Then take your doom, and let me tell thee that if Marina be on the earth I’ll find her, though I have to dig through the base of Mount Caucasus. Ho, without there!”

In a moment more the soldiers came rushing into the apartment.

“Seize the dog!” cried the king, as the soldiers crowded about him, “and strike off his head. Off with it, I say!”

A score of men gathered about the armorer and bore him to his knees. The same calm, iron look rested upon his countenance, and his eyes were still fixed unwaveringly upon the king.

“Ebo, step you forward and strike.”

A stout soldier stepped forth at this summons, and drew his sword. Still Gio flinched not.

“Strike!”

The soldier’s keen weapon was already raised when the king made a motion for him to pause, and then turning to Gio, he said:—

“Once more I give thee a chance for thy life. Wilt thou deliver up to me her whom I seek?”

“Never!”

“Ebo, strike!”

Again the soldier’s sword was raised, but it fell not upon the head of the armorer, for at that instant there sounded a voice, as if from the very foundations of the palace, so deep and sepulchral that all started with awe at its very tones:—

“Mapen, beware! Tempt not thine own fate thus.”

The point of the raised sword dropped harmless upon the pavement, and the now terrified king sprang from his seat.

“Ye gods! whose voice was that?” ejaculated the monarch, hardly conscious of what he said.

"Mapen, tempt us not!" sounded like distant thunder from the realms of space.

"'Tis the oracle!" uttered Prince Phalis, laying his hand upon his father's arm. "Push not this matter further, but let Gio be conducted to a dungeon. We may imprison him, though we may not spill his blood."

"You are right, my son," returned Mapen, as soon as he had recovered from his perturbation; and then turning to the soldiers, he added:—

"Take the prisoner to the safest dungeon beneath the eastern palace, and mind you, Ebo, I shall hold you responsible for his safe keeping."

The officer bowed assent, and unresistingly the armorer was led away. His step was proud and firm, and he looked more like a laurelled hero than like a prisoner being led to his dungeon.

"What make you of that man?" asked the king, as he and his son were left alone with the slaves.

"I can only say that he is a bold, fearless fellow."

"But I mean this strange protection he receives from the oracle," said the king.

"I think I see through it," returned the prince, in a thoughtful mood. "You are warned that by cutting off your best men you are weakening your own power, and raising the people against you, for it is well known that the armorer is a favorite of the city."

"But that the oracle should speak in my palace?"

"It is the voice of Hercules, and may speak where it chooses."

"Perhaps you are right, my son; but at all events, Gio goes not forth from his dungeon till Marina be in the palace."

"Ah, that brings young Strato to my mind," uttered Phalis, with sudden energy. "Let him be taken at once, for we should surely have him within our power."

"Not now, my son."

"Why not? We have cause enough."



“He may better serve our purpose where he is.”

“I do not comprehend.”

“Look ye, Phalis. If any one is to be informed of the whereabouts of Marina, that one will be Strato, for Gio is under obligation to him; and in all probability the young merchant even now knows where she is, for the armorer said there was one other beside himself who possessed the secret of her concealment. Do you not understand?”

“Yes—I see.”

“Well, then, Strato will be likely to visit the lady.”

“Aha, now I see,” exclaimed the prince. “We will have him narrowly watched.”

“Exactly. We will depute a dozen or so of our most trusty men to watch his movements, and when he least expects it, his every step shall be noted. The Lady Marina shall yet be ours.”

“But,” ventured the prince, “would it not be well to make some search among the ruins of the old city? She must certainly be concealed somewhere there, for Gio could not have had time to have gone further.”

“No, that would not be so well, for such a search might only serve to frighten the bird away. We will wait till we are sure of her nest, and then all is safe.”

Again Phalis acknowledged that his father was right, and shortly afterwards he left the divan to select such men as he thought best suited to the object he had in view. A smile was upon his countenance, for he thought he could see the shadow of his success even now cast before him.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE PRISONER AND HIS VISITOR.

WHEN Gio was led from the king's presence, he was conducted out into the central piazza, and across to the eastern wing of the palace, beneath which were the strong dungeons for state prisoners. From the extreme angle of the building there led a flight of stone steps to a dreary apartment beneath, and to this place was the armorer conducted. The pavement of this region was composed of heavy masonry, and here and there were numerous iron trap doors which opened to the vaults that lay deeper down in the earth, each of which was secured by stout bars and locks. One of these was opened, and then the soldiers prepared to force Gio to descend by means of a ladder which had been lowered for that purpose.

"Fear not that I shall resist you," said the armorer, as he observed their preparatory demonstrations. "The king's dungeons have no fear for me."

The soldiers stepped back with a feeling somewhat akin to awe, and with an unfaltering step Gio placed his foot upon the ladder and descended. Then the ladder was drawn up, and the door shut, bolted and locked.

The dungeon into which the armorer was thus cast was small and damp, and all the light and air it received was from perforations in the iron door above; but even those admitted scarcely a beam of light into the cell, though on looking up one could see the dim specks in the door when night had begun to creep around. There was no food, no water in the place; but that might have been brought anon. The couch upon which a prisoner might rest his limbs was a wooden bench, without even straw to relieve its hardness.



As soon as the sound of the soldiers' footsteps had died away in the distance, Gio took from a bag he wore about his neck a small iron tube, open at one end, and within which worked an air-tight piston. At the end of this piston was an indenture, and having broken from a piece of light punk a quantity sufficient for his purpose, he placed it in the said indenture, and then inserting the piston into the tube he drove it home with such force that the combustible was immediately ignited. As soon as this was accomplished, the prisoner produced a small waxen taper, and ere long he had a light.

It was some time past meridian when Gio was consigned to his dungeon, and as time crept slowly on he sat there upon the rough bench, with his light beside him, fashioning small bits of wire into a sort of mail for the neck and breast. There was not the slightest uneasiness manifested upon his countenance, but, on the contrary, he appeared as happy and unconcerned as though he had been by the side of his own forge.

"Ah, Mapen," he murmured to himself, as he twisted piece after piece of the wire, one within the other, "how little dream you of the powers that dwell on earth. Kings may glory in a crown, and they may wield the power it bestows, but they must beware of other powers more mighty than theirs. Ah, upon what flimsy tenure hangs the power of man! and especially of kings! Mapen where is thy master, Xerxes? He is safer than thou. He has fallen—thou art to fall. Death is thy monarch, and he will take thy tribute when he likes. Even now there is one in Tyre mightier than thou, for there dwells in the temple one whose mind is his sceptre. Ah, King Mapen, beware the oracle!"

Something like a smile passed over Gio's face as he spoke, but it was so deep that it might have passed for a frown. Still he worked on, ever and anon casting his eyes up towards the iron door to observe the dim, star-like specks that the daylight formed there.

Minutes lengthened into hours, and hours began to multiply themselves, until at length the light spots in the door began to disappear, and soon they were all gone. Then Gio knew that night had fallen over the city. Half an hour more passed, and at the end of that time he placed his work in his bosom, and began to pace to and fro across his narrow quarters. Another half hour flew by, and the armorer stopped more often in his walk, and listened more anxiously; still no signs of uneasiness were apparent. His taper had burned nearly down to its socket, and he was upon the point of lighting another one, when a slight sound from the large apartment overhead caught his ear. He listened, and distinctly made out footsteps, which seemed to be traversing as if on an errand of search. Ere long the steps approached the door of the armorer's dungeon, and the glimmerings of a light beamed faintly through the small perforations.

"Gio," said a voice from above, in anxious tones.

"I'm here," returned the armorer.

"Good!" exclaimed the person from above, and the next moment a key was heard to turn in the lock that confined one of the bolts to its place. Then another lock was cast loose, and another bolt thrown back, and then the iron door was slowly lifted.

The armorer blew out his flickering taper, and as he turned from the bench the ladder was lowered into the cell, and soon he stood face to face with his deliverer.

"I thought I should never find you," said the latter, as he shut back the door and replaced the bolts.

"'Tis soon enough, Balbec," returned Gio, as he waited for the former to relock the bolts.

The new-comer was indeed Balbec, the priest of the temple; but instead of the light dress in which we saw him before, he now wore a mantle and coif of dark stuff, which rendered his form less perceptible in the darkness.

"Have you seen Strato yet?" continued Gio, as Balbec arose from his work.

"No—I have left that for you."



“ ’Tis well—I’ll see him to-night.”

“ ’Tis best you should; but you must use discretion, for the king may have his eyes upon him, and we had better not have too much work upon our hands. Though we have the power, yet we must use it moderately, nor must you subject yourself to any more such narrow chances as that which you run last night.”

“ Under the same circumstances I might be obliged to,” returned Gio.

“ Certainly—but avoid them if you can.”

As Balbec spoke he led the way up the stairs at the corner of the building, but instead of passing across the piazza, he unlocked a small door that opened to a rear garden, stepped out, and then relocking the door after him, he passed on to where a small stream ran under the wall, and here, without difficulty, they both gained the open space beyond. Once in the street they separated—the priest taking the way to the great temple of Hercules, while the armorer sought the dwelling of Strato.

Gio walked slowly along, meditating as he went, and occasionally his thoughts took to themselves words, and were borne away upon the breeze. Half the contemplated distance of his travel had he gained, when his steps were arrested by a party of the king’s soldiers just coming up from a narrow street to the right, and a moment’s observation showed him that they bore with them two prisoners, both of whom were begging most piteously to be released. Gio trusted that none of the party knew of his arrest, so he made bold to step over and ascertain what had transpired.

“ What is the matter? ” asked the armorer, as he came up to the spot.

The soldiers stopped, and the officer who led them—one of the king’s base tools—insultingly replied:—

“ Get about your business, sirrah. These are two dogs that have been caught breaking the royal laws.”

“ And what laws have they broken? ”

“ It matters not.”

"We have broken no laws," quickly exclaimed one of the young prisoners. "We were only passing home from our day's labor."

"And is not that trampling upon the royal authority, to be in the street at this time of night? The king has especially ordered that when we find two or more people together in the streets after a seasonable hour, we shall arrest them as conspirators. There is some trouble brewing, and Mapen is determined to stop it."

As the officer said this, he would have passed on, but Gio detained him.

"You said the king did not allow the people to congregate in the streets at night, I think?"

"Yes," returned the officer with a peremptory expression.

"And what are those whom you can even now hear brawling at the next turn?"

"They are some of our young nobility."

"Nobility!" iterated Gio, with the utmost sarcasm. "And so our honest laborers—those who produce by the sweat of their brows the food and raiment that nourishes and covers royalty and nobility—must be treated like dogs. Tell me, what will the king do with these two young men, think you?"

"Perhaps hang them?"

"No, no—he dares not do that," uttered the armorer, unable to repress a shudder at the thought that such might be a truth. "The king will not punish his subjects for what they could not avoid."

"Cease your babbling, or you may come in for the same chance," said the officer. "If there be rebellion in Tyre, as the king suspects, I doubt not that you have a hand in it, for I think I heard it whispered this afternoon that Mapen had ordered you to be watched, at any rate."

"Ha, ha, you didn't hear half the truth."

"What further?" asked the officer, not a little surprised at the armorer's manner, even though he affected to hold him in contempt.



“No matter. If you must take those two helpless youths simply because they chanced to be together in the street after dark, then do so; but when you make your report to the king, tell him that for every deed of tyranny like this, he shall surely be called to an account.”

“We are innocent of all wrong, indeed we are,” uttered one of the prisoners, in an imploring tone. “We could not leave our work quicker.”

“Then why didn’t you stay till morning?” roughly asked the officer.

“We had no food in our workshop.”

“Then you had better have starved. But come, for I’ve no time to waste. And as for you,” continued the officer, turning to Gio, “the king shall know of your hints, and your head may keep company with these.”

“Villain, and minion of a greater villain!” pronounced the armorer, in a calm, deep tone; “beware, that the rod your king is preparing for the people of Tyre, falls not upon his own back. He who speaks knows what he says.”

Gio waited to hear no reply, but quickly turning away he strode from the place, and when he once more gained the other side of the street, his steps were quicker and more nervous, and he seemed much moved. Short, broken sentences fell from his lips, his hands were clutched with a powerful grip, and once or twice he turned his gaze back upon the house he had left.

The moon had just risen, and though her silvery beams fell not yet into the streets, yet she gave considerable light by her bright reflection, and Gio kept nearer in under the shade of the buildings. Numerous squads of dissipated young lords and merchants were abroad in the city, making the air infectious with their vulgarity and profaneness, and many were the bitter shades that passed over the armorer’s face as their hootings fell upon his ears. Several times he turned out of his way to avoid them, for he desired not to be mixed up in any broil, and well he knew that an humble artisan would not escape their impudent notice.

Sad indeed were the affairs of Tyre at this time. The great mass of the population were hard-working people, whose labor was called upon to satisfy the demands of a tyrannizing and overbearing nobility. To be laboring people and even to be poor they could well have borne, for they expected nothing better; but to be the mere footballs of a selfish aristocracy—to have the fruits of their labor wrenched from them to support their superiors in idleness, galled them to the quick, and the more, because they could not help themselves. They knew that they were citizens of Tyre, and yet they saw that they were gradually, but surely, losing all the privileges thereto belonging.

Wealth had poured in upon the island city, and power had become hers; but all this was in the hands of a few, and that few had become self-willed and arrogant. In vain had the Herculean oracle warned them of the sure punishment of their iniquities, and in vain had the people pleaded for a redress of their wrongs. The king and the nobles were given over to their wickedness, and though they sometimes feared from the indignation of their subjects, and had even taken the most stringent measures to prevent them from holding any sort of meetings, yet they knew not the dark cloud that was lowering above them.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## STRATO.

WITHIN a luxuriously furnished apartment of a house situated near the grand bazaar, sat a young man of twenty-five years of age. He was strikingly handsome, and his features, which were cast in the purest mould, combined a vast amount of quick-witted intelligence with singular beauty. His hair was a little darker than flaxen, his eyes blue, large and almost dreamy in their expression, but yet capable of sparkling and glowing under excitement. In stature he was of fair size, though he possessed few of those physical points that mark the powerful man. Kindness lurked in every feature of his face, and right good-will beamed from his eyes and lay rivetted in active life about his finely chiseled lips.

Such was young Strato, a merchant of Tyre, whose father had been dead little over a year, and who had inherited vast wealth in a manner that became the noble heart he possessed. At the present time he was sad and gloomy, and though he held in his hand a volume of vellum, written in Persian character, yet he read it not. The golden lamp that stood upon the table by his side shed its light for him to no purpose, for he regarded not its beams.

While thus he sat, the door of his dwelling was unceremoniously opened, and as he started up from his deep reverie, he encountered the gaze of the armorer.

“Ah, Gio,” he uttered, as he tossed the volume upon the table and sprang forward, “you are the man above all others I would see.”

“Then, dear master, I am in season,” returned Gio, as he shook the proffered hand with a joyful look.

“Not master, Gio.”

“You are more my true master now than when I was your servant, Strato, for I will risk even life for you now that I am free to obey you.”

“I thank you, and I may be able to reward you; but a fearful calamity has befallen me, Gio, and I would have you help me.”

“Is it so fearful, then?”

“Yes, yes—they have stolen away my beloved Marina.”

“Who, think you, has taken her?”

“The king, perhaps, for he has stolen her father, and upon my life I believe the poor old man is murdered. O Gio, can you ferret out this king?”

“The prince, good Strato, went to Kison Ludim’s house, and by force he would have dragged Marina to the palace.”

“Oh, the villian!”

“Hold. He did not drag her there, however, for she fled, and took refuge with me.”

“And you saved her? Oh, say that you did, Gio.”

“I did. I bearded the prince, and drove back his hirelings from my shop; then I conducted the fair girl to a place of safety; and ’twas to tell you this that I came here now.”

“May the great God above all gods bless thee, Gio,” ejaculated Strato, as he again grasped his friend’s hand. “You will conduct her to me, will you not?”

“I will conduct you to her, for she must not return to the city at present.”

“Why not?” cried the young man, in surprise. “Surely beneath my roof none would dare to touch her.”

“You know not what a king dares to do when he is driven to it. Mapen desires Marina as a wife for his son, and you may rest assured that he will risk even his life to gain that end. She cannot return to Tyre, but I promised her that you should visit her in her place of retreat.”

“Gio,” said the young man, with sudden energy, “what means this? To what a pass are we coming when the rights of the citizens are thus trampled upon? What phantasy is this that has seized upon the mind of the king?”



“ ’Tis simply that the prince must have to wife the fair Marina.”

“ And by the eternal gods! he shall never have her,” cried Strato, starting quickly across the apartment, and then turning and settling into his seat.

“ So, too, have I sworn,” uttered Gio.

“ But why is this sudden freak of the king’s ? ” asked Strato. “ Upon what does he found his claim ? He asked of Kison Ludim the hand of his daughter for the prince, and the old noble refused him. Then Ludim was sent off on an embassy to Sidon, and he was destroyed—the king says accidentally. Of that he knows best. But why should the monarch press the suit ? Gio, what is the mystery ? ”

“ I freely confess, Strato, that I know the secret of the king’s strange desire on this point, but when I tell thee that I am under an oath not to reveal it, I know you will not question me further. But one thing I can assure you: he shall be thwarted.”

“ Well,” returned the young man, after gazing for a moment into the face of the armorer in silence, during which a variety of shades passed over his features, “ I will not urge you beyond your entire willingness; but yet ’tis strange—’tis unaccountable.”

“ So are there other things in Tyre which are strange,” said Gio, in peculiar cadence. “ Strato, to-night, as I came hither, I met some of the king’s soldiers, and they were roughly dragging to prison two Tyrian youths. Now what heinous crime think you they had committed ? ”

“ I cannot guess.”

“ I will tell you. They had been later than usual at their work. One of them I know. He supports by his toil an aged mother and sister. They were passing home late at night, and for this they were thrown into prison. The king fears that a crushed people may plot against him, and as another mark of his cruelty he had ordered that none of them shall meet in the streets after dark upon pain of death. So these innocent youths may die by the executioner’s hand.”

"Oh, that is horrible, Gio—horrible!" cried Strato, shuddering at the picture thus drawn.

"Ay, it is horrible; but do you think the scene ends here? No! All Tyre is cankered with such foul blotches. The very atmosphere is diseased, and breeds mora' pestilence! Can such a state of things exist? The people have rights as well as the nobles and the king, and each alike should serve some good purpose. From the monarch on his throne to the veriest beggar in the street, all, all must serve something, and all, too, are men, fashioned after the image of the God of all gods, and manhood must be made manifest. If the subjects of the king were made to be trodden in the dust like brutes, then why were they created with hopes and fears, with affections and loves? and why, too, did a wise God give them human feelings? Every man owes allegiance to the government, but when government runs into bloody riot, and feeds itself on death and destruction, then such allegiance is no longer due. Dissipation and debauchery stalk through the streets like gaunt spectres, while innocence and virtue must tremble and hide their heads! Strato, do I not speak truly?"

"Alas! Gio, you do," returned the young man, while he regarded the excited armorer with feelings of the deepest awe. "That which you speak is too true; but how, how can it be helped?"

"Strato," returned the armorer, his eyes sparkling more brilliantly, and his chest heaving with increased emotion, but in a tone fearfully low, "I had a foul excrescence once grow upon my hand. It troubled me. Wouldst thou know how I rid myself of it? I cut it off!"

Strato half started from his seat, and gazed earnestly, fixedly, into Gio's face.

"What mean you?" he at length asked, at the same time drawing a long breath.

"Did you ever hear of a man's treading upon an asp?" asked Gio, in return.

"Yes."



“What did the reptile do?”

“It stung him.”

“And yet, Strato, how insignificant a thing is an asp when compared with man! Was not the asp’s sting fatal?”

“Yes.”

“Then never tread upon one!”

“There is some deep meaning beneath all this, Gio. What is it?”

“Canst thou not see it?”

“No.”

“Look through the city, and see how matters stand.”

“I have done it often.”

“I’ll open the picture further,” said the armorer, with one of his peculiar looks. “Years ago the Tyrian nobles began to amass wealth, and they began to grow indolent. More luxuries were necessary to sustain them in their dissipations. Wealth still continued to flow into their coffers, and they became more and more avaricious. With wealth and ease came arrogance and domination, and at length downright cruelty marked their course. Now the people of Tyre have the power to stop the flood, for they can sweep their tyrants from the earth. Dost thou understand me?”

“Great God! Gio,” ejaculated Strato, with a shudder, “the people will not rise?”

“Would you, Strato, were you in their place?”

The young man spoke not, for the fearful truth of Gio’s meaning flashed upon his mind. He saw now what he had never seen before, and he saw, too, how plain was the solution of the problem.

“I see you understand me,” continued Gio, after a pause. “But you have nothing to fear; for were all our wealthy nobles like you, the people would spill the last drop of their blood in their service and defence.”

“But, O Gio! this thing will not happen, will it?”

“I know not,” returned the freedman, “but yet I fear that Tyre is preparing a scourge that shall lash herself even unto death. Time, however, will reveal it all.”

"I see, I see," murmured the young man to himself, bending his head in thought. "The truth comes upon me now. Are there movements towards an insurrection?"

"Only such as the king and the nobles are themselves forcing on. If the oppressed people do rise, it will be almost spontaneously."

"May the gods avert such a fate from our city, for the results would be terrible!"

"Not more so than the present aspects of our horizon. Hark! Hear you that foul brawling?"

"Yes," returned Strato, as the sounds of loud voices in high discord were borne along upon the night air.

"Would it be terrible to have such men as these removed from the city?" asked the armorer.

"Perhaps they deserve it," returned Strato, in a sort of forced tone.

"Then let them beware lest they receive their deserts. But enough of that. I have spoken to you as I would have spoken to no other noble in Tyre. Now to Marina. You may go to her to-morrow night, if you wish."

"Of course I wish it," answered Strato, with sudden animation. "But where is she?"

"Her retreat is among the ruins of the old city."

"In so dreary a place?"

"She has comfortable quarters, as you shall see when you go there."

"Well, and at what time shall we go?"

"Say an hour earlier than this."

"Then I will be ready. But," continued the young man, with a slight show of apprehension, "may there not be difficulty, after what has happened, in passing the gates?"

"No, I can easily assume a disguise, and with you there will be no difficulty. I shall pass out as one of your attendants, and they will think you are going on board some of the vessels in the harbor."

"Then be it to-morrow night," said the young man.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE CONSPIRATORS.

THE heavy gong that hung upon the turret of one of the northern donjons of the fortifications sounded heavily upon the air, announcing the hour of midnight. The moon has risen high in the heavens, and now shed its light in a silvery flood over the city of Tyre. The noise of revelry was hushed, or, if it broke upon the air at all, it was from within doors. For half an hour the tramp of soldiers sounded upon the walks, as they went to and returned from their posts, and then all was quiet.

Along beneath the walls of the buildings that faced the grand bazaar moved a dusky figure, with slow and stealthy steps, towards the eastern part of the city. Soon there came another, and then another, moving with the same cat-like tread, and studiously keeping within the deepest shade. In other parts of the city, too, this same thing appeared. Along the walls of the palace, the temple, and through most of the streets, crept these dim spectres, and all towards one point. If they met they spoke not, nor did they seem to note anything about them, only avoiding observation.

It was a strange sight, these dark ghosts, thus moving through the quiet avenues of the city, and one to have seen them might have supposed they possessed only the powers of slow and silent locomotion, or that they were so many mutes crawling away into the darkness.

Near the south-eastern angle of the city walls was a rocky, barren spot, upon the inner edge of which, where the soil was richer, grew a thick grove of cypress trees. It was a quiet, solemn place, moved only to life by the song of the dashing waves, and the low murmurings of the breeze that

played among the cypress boughs. Towards this spot moved the seeming phantoms of the hour. One by one they passed through the grove, and stood within the shade of the trees. Ere long an hundred of them had thus met, and as the moonbeams now fall upon their faces, we can see that they are all Tyrian artisans and laborers.

For several minutes after they were thus collected not a word was spoken, but anxiously they regarded each other, and occasionally furtive glances were turned back towards the sleeping city; but the rocks and the trees hid them, and a sense of safety put all their fears to rest. Those were firm and stalwart men, and upon their countenances dwelt the unmistakable marks of unalterable resolution. They stood firm as posts, and almost they appeared as if awaiting the battle shock. Their hands were either clutched nervously together, or folded across their breasts like iron cross-bars, while from beneath their mantles gleamed many a sharp, bright blade.

At length one of their number, a middle-aged man, towards whom all eyes were turned, waved his hand in the air.

"Listen!" whispered the people. "Uz would speak to us."

"Brothers," said Uz, in a low tone, but which yet reached all ears, "have you done your duty?"

"Yes," replied they all.

"Have you found a recreant among the poor, oppressed people of Tyre?"

"No, not one," responded the crowd.

"Then our cruel rulers shall fall. Listen, brothers. We will do nothing rashly, nor out of season; but the point has come, and it has been driven home to our hearts. Where is the man among ye that would longer endure the foul wrongs that are heaped upon us? Every man, if he labor diligently for himself and his fellows, is entitled to a home. And what makes a home? Is it not the sacredness of the affections that we have a right to find there? What would you think of a garden that had no flowers, or a field that bore



no corn? The same is a home without flowers of affection, and the bread of common comfort. Look at our homes, if homes ye can call them, and tell me what ye see there? Are not the hard earnings of our hands wrenched from us, and are not our wives and children starving for the want of the proceeds of those earnings? Are we not forced to support a government that only gives us misery and degradation? But even this we might bear were it not that blacker still is the night that grows upon us. Our blood is but as water, and it flows as freely at the will of the base men who rule us. Even the public streets, and the fresh air that God has given us, are interdicted to us after the labors of the day are closed. Ye gods! my brothers, think of it!"

A low murmur ran through the assembly, and they swayed to and fro beneath the workings of the intense passion that had been thus aroused.

"Think of it!" continued Uz, the veins beneath his pure white skin swelling as though they would burst. "Our daughters—those fair flowers of our domestic nurseries—and even our wives, are not safe from the infernal lusts of the tyrants! Oh, thou great God who rulest above all gods, and has it come to this! Dishonor, ten thousand times worse than death, riots upon our hearthstones, and cankers in our social system. Shall we bear it longer?"

One long, simultaneous "No!" burst from the assembled people. Uz leaped down from the small rock upon which he had been standing; and closely, earnestly, his brothers gathered about him.

"Down, down upon your knees!" he cried.

In one solid mass those wrong-seared men knelt about their leader and clasped their hands towards heaven. Their countenances were lighted up by the beams of the moon, and every lineament could be traced in its workings. Fearful were the purposes that lay imaged there, and fearfully strange was the story of wrong that had formed purposes in their bosoms.

"By the Great God above all gods, and by the immortal

and all-powerful Hercules, we most solemnly swear, that vengeance shall be ours. That we will not rest from our earnest labors till our tyrant oppressors are laid beneath our feet! Swear!"

"We swear!"

"And eternal perdition seize upon him who dares waver in his purpose."

"Amen!" responded the people, and then, following their leader's movements, they rose to their feet.

"Where is Gaba?" asked Uz.

"Here," returned a powerful man, stepping forth from amongst the rest.

"Gaba," continued Uz, "have you had opportunity to prosecute your share of our business yet?"

"Yes, I have gained more than I expected. In my quarter there are over two thousand ready men, and each one can be armed at a moment's notice. I have moved carefully, and I know my ground."

"Well, good Gaba. And thou, Alzac, how hast thou succeeded?"

"Equally as well," returned another, stepping forth by the side of Gaba. "There be some among the artisans in my quarter who will not rise against their own noble neighbors, but they will not betray us."

"Ha, and how many such are there?"

"Only a few. Some dozen, or so."

"Then, brothers, against that we'll raise no objection. If there be a noble who can command the love of honest men, then that noble is not such as those against whom we war.

Let them live, for there will be but few such in Tyre. We strike not for the sake of blood, but that our own blood may be spared to us, and when we do strike, it shall be with a hand so firm that the tyrant shall not have time to quake ere the stroke fall upon his head."

"Uz," asked Alzac, "will Gio, the armorer, join us, think you?"

"Whether he joins us or not," returns Uz, "he will be



faithful to us. Have you not heard how, on the night last past, he slew seven of the king's hirelings—and one of them in the very face of the prince?"

"No, no, no, tell us of it," cried a dozen voices.

Uz explained the matter as best he could, and though he knew not all, yet his recital was sufficient to startle his hearers with the wildest enthusiasm. He knew that Gio had given protection to some one against the prince, and that he had maintained that protection against those whom the king himself had sent to the rescue.

"Then Gio is surely with us," said Alzac, as Uz concluded.

"He is," rejoined Uz; "but let us not draw him into our plans at present, for if I am not mistaken he will operate best alone."

"Uz is right," rejoined Gaba, and to this idea all signified their assent.

"Now," said Uz, as he once more stepped upon the small rock where he had before stood, "let us well understand what we are about, and then we will separate. Remember, my brothers, our cause is a just one, and the wrongs of years are burning upon our heads. Be silent now, and firm, frighten not the lion from his lair till we are ready to strike; and when we are ready, be firm enough to shrink not from his roar. Watch ye one another, and let each feel that the eyes of the other are on him. He who dares think of betraying our cause will live not to lisp it. If you find one of our brothers that shrinks from the work through cowardice, point out to him the iron heel that tramples him in the dust, and bid him steel himself to the rescue. Once more: we are firm and true, even unto death. Swear!"

"We swear!" responded all.

"Now watch for the summons to our next meeting, and until then, the gods speed our cause."

As Uz thus spoke he turned towards the cypress grove and passed through. One after another, the others followed him, and as they approached the city they separated, each going his own way and alone. With the same stealthy steps

that had marked their departure did they creep along the streets towards their homes, gliding through the deep shades of the building like specters.

Those men looked harmless enough as they silently threaded their way, but their hearts were burning with a volcanic fire, which, though it slumbered now, was ere long to burst madly forth!

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## CHAPTER X

### THE DISCOVERY, AND THE FRUITLESS MISSION.

ON the next morning, King Mapen entered his divan at the usual hour, and shortly afterwards he was joined by the prince. The first thing the king did after saluting his son, was to send for the jailor.

“I’ve a new plan in my head,” said Mapen, after the attendant had gone on his errand.

“Ah,” uttered the prince.

“Yes, and I think it’s a good one.”

“What is its subject?”

“The armorer.”

“Good. What is it?”

“I’ll starve his secret from him,” returned the king, with sparkling eyes. “He is strong and powerful now, and that makes him proud; but just let him waste away beneath gaunt famine, and I think ’twill take down his stubbornness somewhat.”



"Glorious!" ejaculated Phalis. "He will be a more stubborn man than I take him for, if he can stand out long against such a course. Not a week certainly."

"No, not over half of it, for he shall parch with thirst, too."

"Then may fortune crown our efforts, and let me once get my eyes on the fair damsel again and she shall not escape me. Pshaw! I was a fool to lose her so easily before, but I had no thoughts of her running so nimbly."

"And you were foolish, too," added the king, "that you did not push your search in the armorer's house, for you might have obtained javelins and slain him at a distance."

"Yes, but such a squad of people began to collect about the door, that the matter took a serious turn."

"We must hang a score or two of the dogs upon the trees," muttered the king, as a dark scowl disfigured his face.

"Would that I had the hanging of the whole of them," kindly offered the prince, with an impatient movement.

"Ah, here comes the jailor," uttered Mapen, as that functionary made his appearance.

"Valero," he continued, "have you seen Gio this morning?"

"No, sire."

"You knew he was confined?"

"Yes; Ebo told me last night."

"Is his dungeon strong?"

"The strongest in Tyre. Hercules himself, ere he became immortal, might have beat its walls in vain."

"Good. See you, now, that he has no food nor drink; and you may go to him and tell him from the king, that he will parch and starve there till he gives me the intelligence I seek; and look ye, Valero, keep a strict watch over him. Go tell him this now, and if he relents, call upon me with the information."

The jailor bowed and withdrew.

"I hope the fellow will not die till we find the daughter of Kison Ludim," said the prince, thoughtfully.

“If he does, we have still another chance,” returned the king. “Our spies will lay upon the track of young Strato.”

“Good—so they will.”

For five or ten minutes the king and prince held a rambling conversation upon various topics, and just as the latter was enlarging upon the necessity of allowing the rich merchants and their sons all the power and privileges they wanted, the jailor hurriedly re-entered the apartment. His face was flushed by an unwonted excitement, and he trembled at every joint.

“How now?” exclaimed the king, somewhat startled by the officer’s manner.

“The prisoner, sire,” stammered Valero, turning pale as death.

“What prisoner? Who?”

“Gio.”

“Ha, and what of him? Speak! What of Gio?”

The king sprang forward as he spoke, and grasped Valero by the arm.

“Tell me!” he cried again.

“He’s gone, sire!”

“Gone!”

“Yes, sire—escaped!”

“Escaped! Gio escaped!”

“He has, indeed.”

“Now, by all the gods of both worlds!” shouted the monarch, nearly bursting with rage. “If this be true, I’ll—I’ll— But no, no, no, Valero, you went to the wrong dungeon. Go again, and search. The armorer could not have broken out.”

“He did not break out, sire; for the door of the dungeon was found securely locked.”

“Then why is this? Gio’s not gone!”

“Indeed he is, sire.”

“Have you searched all the dungeons?”

“No, sire, for Ebo knows well which one the prisoner was placed in.”



“Then how, in the name of Pluto’s hosts, got he out?” urged the king, half frantic with the excitement of this startling intelligence.

“He must have been let out by some one who gained access to the keys,” returned the jailor, in trembling accents.

“And where were the keys?”

“In my own apartment. Ebo returned them to me last night, and I hung them up as usual in their proper place.”

“Then there are traitors in the palace!” shouted the monarch, as he started upon one of his nervous walks across the apartment. “You found the keys this morning, slave?”

“Yes, sire, where I left them.”

For three minutes the enraged, foiled monarch walked up and down the place, with his hands clutched within the bosom of his mantle, while his teeth grated together like files, and his eyes rolled with perfect wildness.

“Valero,” he uttered, at length, stopping in his walk, and shaking his clenched fist in the face of his officer, “yesterday I told Ebo I would hold him responsible for the safe keeping of this armorer of Tyre. Now I’ll hold both your lives till you find me the traitor who has done this thing, and if you find him not, your heads shall answer for it.”

“But, sire”——

“No buts, slave! I hold you as I’ve said. Go and call Ebo, and search the dungeons through, for Gio may yet”——

Mapen did not finish his sentence, for at that moment a soldier came rushing into the divan, all covered with dust and sweat.

“Now, knave, what dire disease of affairs brings you in such shape?” cried the monarch.

“This morning, your majesty,” breathlessly uttered the soldier, “we saw him whom we took to the dungeon yesterday, busily at work in his shop.”

“Is’t Gio of whom you speak?”

“The same, sire.”

“Then is the very air laden with disaster, and men breathe

it. Gio escaped! Gio at work in his shop! Dog! slave! is't true, what you say?"

"I saw it with my own eyes, sire."

"Then call forth the centurion's full host, and take the dog of an armorer"——

"Hold, father," interrupted the prince, plucking his parent by the sleeve. "Let's consider of this matter."

"No, not a moment," angrily uttered Mapen, shaking off his son's hold. "Start you, sirrah, and call up the centurion of the east guard. Bid him hasten his men into service, and then report himself to me. Were there ten thousand reasons why I should not take off the villain's head, I'd cast them all aside and have it. Phalis, attend you the soldiers, and expedite this business."

The prince knew his father too well to stop for further argument, and without remark he followed the soldier from the royal presence. It took but a short time to call the centurion's men to a state for duty, and ten minutes from the time of the prince's departure the commander was in the presence of his king.

"Are you the centurion?" asked Mapen, as the officer entered the divan.

"I am, sire," returned he, not a little surprised that the monarch should have asked such a question, seeing that he had been in attendance upon the king for years.

"Do you know where Gio, the armorer, lives?"

"I know the place well."

"Then bring him before me."

"And if he resist?"

"Then bring him dead!" exclaimed the king, in fiery accents. "But mind you that I see him within this hour."

"If he be in his shop, sire, your commands shall be obeyed."

"And if he be not in his shop, then find him. He cannot leave the city, for I have issued orders to the effect of keeping him in."



The centurion bowed low before his monarch, and, with a look of confident success, he withdrew.

People wondered as they saw the king's officer at the head of his guard, for they had not failed to notice the movement that had already been made; but they stopped to ask no questions, only watching the armed party as they moved quickly past, and then making such remarks with their neighbors as the circumstances naturally called up.

The centurion made all possible haste in his expedition, and as he approached the armorer's shop he heard the sound of the heavy hammer, and the sharp, clear ring of the anvil. He knew that Gio was at work, and for a moment he hesitated to consider whether any extra precautions were necessary. Ere he proceeded further he detached ten of his men and sent them around to guard the stairs that led down from the house-top at the end of the street, and having done this he proceeded at once to the door of the shop.

The powerful armorer was there, busy at his anvil, and as he heard the tramp of many feet, he raised his head. A moment he regarded the centurion, and then quietly laying down his hammer he asked:

"What seek ye now?"

"I seek you."

"Who wants me?"

"The king."

"Immediately?"

"Yes."

"Then come and take me."

As Gio spoke, he sprang through the small rear door, which he closed after him. The officer uttered an exclamation of anger as he saw this movement, and quickly darting forward, he raised the latch and attempted to push open the door, but it resisted his efforts.

"Ho, boy," he exclaimed to Abal; "how is this door fastened?"

"It shuts with a spring lock upon the inside, sir."

"Then give me the key."

“Gio has it.”

The centurion stopped to hear no more, but seizing the heavy sledge that stood against the anvil, he dealt a blow upon the door with all his might, and he had the satisfaction, too, of seeing it burst from its bolt and fly open. In an instant he dropped the sledge and jumped through, followed by a score of his soldiers. It was but the work of a moment to clear the passage beyond and spring up the stairs; but on pushing open the door that next stood in his way, he started back in dismay upon beholding the venerable form of Balbec, the priest of Hercules.

“Men of arms, what unseemly haste is this that drives thee so madly on?” asked the priest, as he calmly regarded the leader of the intruders.

“We seek Gio, the armorer,” breathlessly returned the centurion. “The king has ordered it. If ye know whither he went, oh, tell us, for Mapen holds me to the task, and his displeasure will fall heavily upon my head.”

“If you would find him you must seek him,” said Balbec; “and if your head is in danger then you had better haste, for Gio is not a man to be easily taken.”

Thus speaking, the priest walked slowly out from the apartment, and the soldiers, trembling, stood one side to let him pass, for even the hem of Balbec’s garment they dared not sacrilegiously touch.

The centurion instantly separated his men, and every nook and corner contiguous to the armorer’s dwelling was searched in vain. A messenger was hastily despatched to the spot where the stairs led down against the wall, and a dozen more were sent over the tops of the houses, but nowhere could Gio be found. Two hours did the soldiers hunt for their prey, and at the end of that time, with a sad, trembling heart, the centurion drew them together, and set out on his return to the palace.

When Mapen heard of the officer’s failure, his rage knew no bounds. With a chilling oath he ordered the centurion to be thrown into confinement, and then he strode up and



down his divan as though he would have walked through the very marble walls that opposed him.

“Phalis,” said he, stammering in his hot haste, “what—what shall be done?”

“What I would have told thee ere you sent the centurion on his errand,” returned the prince, in a persuasive tone.

“And what was that?”

“To let Gio go at large for the present, and watch him, and I think that between him and Strato we shall be sure to hit upon the Lady Marina.”

“’Tis hard, ’tis hard, Phalis, thus to be bearded,” returned the king, in calmer tones, but yet with a deep spice of pain.

“I know it; but ’tis harder to lose Marina.”

“Good. You speak the truth, Phalis. It shall be done as you say; but yet, I’ll not brook another such movement from Gio, even though I tempt the very gods.”

“Then I’ll hie me and set the watch,” said the prince, as he passed out from his father’s presence.

The king was left alone, and as the sound of his son’s footsteps died away in the distance, he sank back upon his throne. A single circumstance alone had given rise to all his disquietude, but yet ’twas enough to bow him down in fear and anguish. He forgot how many backs had groaned beneath his bondage—he thought not of the blood that had been spilled to appease his hot wrath—nor dwelt he upon the misery his own hand was sowing broadcast in the midst of human hearts. He only knew that danger threatened himself and his son—that their interests were at stake, and it made him wretched. He thought not of rooting up the evil by humanity, but he thought to kill it by revenge. Mapen stands not alone in his mode of action!

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE LOVERS—THE FEARFUL DREAM.

AT the appointed hour Gio called upon Strato, but in such a guise that the young man started in surprise at what he supposed to be the entrance of a perfect stranger. The armorer's disguise was the dress of a Cyprian sailor, and his face was covered by a thick beard.

"Don't be frightened," said Gio, smiling at the young merchant's mistake.

"Indeed, Gio, but you fit your disguise well," uttered Strato, as he rose and extended his hand. "None would know you thus."

"I think so myself. But come—prepare you now as soon as possible, for the moon will be up by the time we reach the coast, and I would be clear of the city under cover of the darkness."

Strato was speedy in his preparations, and ere long the two set out. The young man found no difficulty in passing through the gates, nor did the sentry think of questioning the supposed Cyprian. They passed along down the rocky pier that ran out into the harbor, and at the end of it, near where lay half a dozen vessels, they found a small boat which they cast loose from its fastenings, and then leaping into it they shoved off.

Gio took the oars and plied himself to the task of the passage. Half the distance had been gained across the narrow straits, when the armorer raised his oars from the water, and bent his ear over the side of the boat, as if to listen.

"What now?" asked Strato, watching with considerable interest the movement of his companion.



"There is something on the water between here and the city," returned Gio, still listening.

"It cannot be that we are followed," fell from the young man's lips, in tones of anxiety.

"I'm afraid we are."

"But who could have seen us?"

"I know not," returned Gio, as he once more dipped his oars into the water. "But the king is wily, and he has, perhaps, had spies upon you. However, we have nothing to fear. We can reach the shore before they can overtake us."

The armorer was right in his belief, for he and Strato had leaped upon the sandy coast before the pursuing boat—if such it were—had come in sight, and starting off towards the south, they made all haste to get out of the way before the eyes of spies could reach them.

Before the moon arose the two men had reached the tall column, and here, turning in among the ruins, they were safe from observation. Strato was somewhat puzzled when he saw his guide stop in front of the porphyry pedestal, but his wonder was changed to an almost incredulous astonishment when he saw the massive structure move from its foundations.

"Go down," said Gio, as he threw back the slab that covered the entrance.

The young man needed no second urging, for he saw the glimmer of the light which shot up from below, and with a quickly beating heart he descended the marble steps. The first object upon which his eyes rested was the fair Marina, and rushing forward, he clasped her to his bosom. Long did the fair girl hang upon the fond embrace that thus sustained her, and when she raised her eyes they were wet with tears of joy.

"O Marina, thou sweetest flower of my soul, thanks be to the great God that I see thee once more," ejaculated Strato, as he again pressed her in transport to his bosom.

"If I had lost thee, how dark would have been the night of life."

"Thou hast not lost me, dear Strato," returned Marina, as she drew her lover to a seat, where she threw her arms about his neck. "I have longed for this moment, but my heart, with all its love, had not pictured such happiness as this. To see thee, to lean upon thee, and to feel that I am yours! O, 'tis blessed indeed."

"Ay, Marina, and 'tis a bliss which I trust shall ever be ours. It must be ever ours, for I could not live without thee."

For a long hour those two fair beings sat there and told over again the story of their love. They had been intimate even from childhood, and while yet they were scarcely able to talk, had they been affianced by their parents. They had learned to live in the bright atmosphere of love, and each had ever endeavored to cultivate all those charms which could minister to the happiness of the other.

The bond of union that drew those two souls within its folds was not a mere passion—a thing of sudden love—but a pure and holy flame of willing devotion at the shrine of loveliness and truth. Their love gave them joy, and gave them pride, for life itself was all bound up in the bright meshes.

The hour flew too quickly by. Minutes seemed scarcely to have linked themselves together, when Gio said 'twas time to depart.

"Oh, cruel Gio," murmured Marina, clinging more fondly to her lover, "you will not tear him from me yet."

"We must go now, fair lady. You shall see him again; but long visits will excite suspicion, for Strato is under the eyes of spies."

"One more half hour, good Gio," urged the young man, in persuasive tones.

"No, no, Strato, not unless you would risk the safety of the lady."

"Well, well, Marina, then I must go," said the young man, as he imprinted upon her lips one more fond kiss. "But be of good cheer, for I shall come again."



"You will bring him soon, will you not, Gio?" asked the fair girl, rising from her seat and laying her hand imploringly upon the armorer's arm.

"Yes—perhaps on the third night from now."

Young Strato clasped Marina once more in his arms, and then he started to go. At the foot of the steps he turned to take one more look at the object of his love. She stood where he had left her, as calm and motionless as marble. Over her beautiful face there was spread a look of such painful anguish, such unspeakable melancholy, that he was himself half transfixed.

"Strato," she murmured, "farewell!"

"What mean that look—that tone? Speak, Marina," cried the young man, springing back to her side.

"Farewell!" she murmured again, in a tone that seemed to tear itself out from her very heart.

"Speak, Marina. What moved thee thus?"

"Dear Strato, blame me not that my heart fails me now; but there is a weight upon it I cannot avoid nor remove. If we meet again on earth"—

"—sh! Speak not so, dearest," cried the young man, wondering what could have produced this sudden dejection.

"I shall see you again."

"But if you do not, you will ever remember me," mournfully returned the down-hearted girl, as the tears began to gather in her eyes. "You will not forget me."

"Marina," said Gio, in a kind tone, "you must not feel thus. Esther will be a faithful companion, and we will visit you again ere long."

"Do not think me weak or unthankful," exclaimed Marina, laying her head upon Strato's bosom, and bursting into tears; "but, oh, there is a fearful forboding of evil hanging over my heart."

"Then put it away, dearest," urged he. "Come, look up and be happy before I go. There is nothing to fear."

"Strato," uttered the fair daughter of Ludim, with sudden calmness; "last night I had a dream—such a dream as

means more than the mere phantasy of sleep. I thought I was a bird—a bird so beautiful that all other birds were envious. You were my keeper, and you placed me in a golden cage, and then you set two lions to watch, and you felt sure that against such sentinels there could be no danger of my being stolen away. The night came on, and while one lion slept, the other kept watch over my golden home. Suddenly I heard the lions both growl, and as I started up from my rest, I saw a huge vulture approaching my cage. I tried to shriek, but I could not. The powerful beasts roared, but the dread vulture heeded them not, for he feared them not. The huge bird sailed around me, and at length he struck at me with his talons, but the bars resisted him. The lions leaped with all their power, but they could not reach the enemy. Again the vulture struck, but this time he caught one of the bars in his blood-stained beak, and he wrenched it off. I shrank away into the corner, and I tried to beg for mercy, but no sound came from my tongue. Another bar was loosened, and then the fearful foe reached me; he caught me in his talons, and he bore me away. Up, up, up, we went, till the earth was hid behind the veil of her night. The cruel talons pierced into my flesh, and at length, when I had nearly lost all consciousness, I uttered a shrill, sharp cry, and the vulture let me go. I was falling, falling, into the dark abyss beneath me, and closing my eyes against the terrible fate—I awoke! Oh, I see it now—all, all, just as I dreamed it.”

As the fair girl concluded, she shuddered fearfully at the picture which dwelt so vividly in her mind, and throwing her arms around her lover’s neck, she sobbed as though her heart would break.

“ ’Twas naught but a dream, dearest,” whispered Strato.

“ So is life all a dream,” quickly uttered Marina; “ and perhaps those who quickest wake from it are the happiest.”

“ Is it not happiness to live for me ? ”

“ Oh, yes, yes.”

“ Then live and be happy.”



"I will, I will. I'll try to drive this phantom from me; but oh, dear Strato, you know not how fearful it was."

"Come," said Gio, who had all this time stood near the foot of the steps, "time is flying away with our minutes."

"I'll come," answered Strato; and then turning to his heart's idol, he added:—

"There, Marina, the gods watch over thee and bless thee. Be of good cheer, now, for Gio assures me that the power to harm thee cannot much longer endure. You will watch her well, and comfort her, good Esther, will you not?"

"In truth I will, sir," earnestly replied the armorer's daughter.

"Then for the present, fare thee well."

"Farewell!" responded Marina.

Strato heard that word, and its tones struck painfully upon his heart, but he turned not back again, for he dared not trust his own feelings in the ordeal. Sadly he followed the armorer up the steps, where he waited a moment for the movement of the machinery that was necessary to throw the pedestal back from its place, and then he stepped out upon the pavement.

The moon was shining brightly in the eastern heavens, and as the gaunt shadows of the pillars and fractured walls lay along upon the pavement and greensward in dark lines, lending to the relics of the past a more solemn grandeur, the young man could not but feel gloomy and downcast.

"Gio," said he, as the armorer turned from the pedestal, after it had been moved back to its place, "what a picture is this of the frailty of man!"

"All things earthly must pass away," returned Gio, himself somewhat moved by the peculiar solemnity of the place.

"Ay, but these grim walls and toppling monuments passed untimely into decay. They fell beneath the hand of the spoiler while yet in the pride of youth and power. So may we fall."

"Tyre fell in the height of her wickedness and lust. She was in youth and power, but that youth was given to

licentiousness, and that power to base uses. The spoiler came and cut her off. But even now, see how the green ivy clings to her walls, and how the fair cypress mourns over her faded form."

"But Tyre is wicked still," said young Strato, with a shudder.

"Yes," replied Gio, "and her wickedness shall be uprooted, and the wicked shall be cut off in their hour of triumph."

Strato gazed earnestly into the strangely working features of the armorer, but he made no further remark. His mind sank back into its own reflections, and silently he passed out from the piazza of the temple.

Neither Gio nor his companion saw the dark forms that crouched behind the marble columns within the temple, nor dreamed they that they were watched. They heard not the stealthy footfalls that began to sound upon the pavement they had left behind, nor listed they the low whispers that began to break upon the air.

The moon rode higher and higher, and her bright beams began to gain space in the temple as the shadows of the walls and columns were shortened. But other shadows were now there—shadows that moved and flitted about from corner to corner, as though the solid columns were changing places.



## CHAPTER XII.

## A DOUBLE CAPTURE.

LONG after Gio and Strato left the subterranean apartment, the two girls sat together in silence.

Marina had wiped away her tears, for she had listened to the soothing words of her companion, and after uniting in their evening prayers they laid themselves down upon their couch.

"I dare not sleep," murmured the fair girl, as she rested her head upon her pillow.

"And why?" asked Esther, placing her arm affectionately about the fearful fair one. "All is safe here."

"Ah, Esther, your own words tell me that you, too, fear."

"Me?"

"Yes, Esther. Your voice trembles, and you speak with hope, rather than assurance."

"Then happy am I if I can even hope. Why cannot you hope also?"

"Because I should hope against hope. Strato looked gloomy when he left me."

"He was gloomy, Marina, because your own fears made him so. He feared nothing."

"I wish I were rid of fear; but I am not. The very air seems laden with the reflection of that fearful dream. My poor father is gone, perhaps murdered, and I am"—

"Under the protection of one as kind and powerful as he," interrupted Esther. "My own father has sworn to protect you, and if he is able he will do it. Of course there are circumstances in the future which none of earth can foresee, but let us not fear them till they come."

“ You have not lost a father, Esther, nor are you hunted down by a ruthless king. I know I have friends, and—— Hark! ”

“ What is it ? ” quickly asked Esther, who had been so intent upon the words of her companion that she heard nothing else.

“ Heard you not that noise ? ”

“ No. Where ? ”

“ I thought ’twas from overhead. ”

“ I’m sure I did not hear it. ”

“ There! Heard you not that ? ”

“ I did hear something then, ” returned Esther, raising her head from her pillow.

They both listened for several moments, and then the sound came again. It was a sort of thumping, and appeared to come from the porphyry pedestal.

“ It may be our waiting-man, ” suggested Esther, as she arose from her couch and stood upon the pavement.

“ He would not come at this hour, ” returned Marina, trembling like an aspen.

As she spoke, she, too, arose from the couch, and drawing near to the side of her companion, she stood in painful silence.

“ Do you not hear footsteps upon the pavement above ? ” she at length asked.

“ Yes, ” returned Esther.

“ And there are a number of them, too. ”

“ There must be. ”

“ The gods protect us! ”

“ Let us fear not yet, ” urged Esther, vainly endeavoring to quiet her own trembling. “ They cannot know the secret of this place. ”

“ Great God! ” ejaculated Marina, starting with a sudden thought, “ may not your father and Strato have been watched ? Your father spoke to-night of spies! ”

Esther spoke not, for the fearful thought had already found its way to her own mind, and for this had she trembled.





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Again the girls listened, and ere long it seemed as though some heavy body were being dragged over the pavement above their heads. Then for a moment all was still, save a slight pattering, as if of rapidly changing footfalls; then even that died away, and all was quiet.

"They're gone," whispered Esther.

Marina might have spoken in reply, but at that moment there came a sound so heavy that it seemed to roll its echo like thunder through the place.

Again all was still, save the beatings of the poor girl's hearts.

"Heavens, Marina," ejaculated the armorer's daughter, "they are indeed forcing their way to our retreat. My father's steps have been watched!"

"Oh, let me die here!" fell in fluttering accents from the poor fugitive's lips. "Now I am ready. Oh, my dream! my dream!"

"Hush!" whispered Esther. "They have not yet broken through the stout barrier that guards us from the world. The stout masonry may yet prove too strong for them."

"No, no; my dream! my prophetic dream! The greedy vulture has soared above the reach of my lion guardians, and now he pounces upon me."

Again came that dreadful sound, and while yet the echo trembled upon the air there came a crash as though the surrounding walls were tumbling from their foundations.

"The pedestal has gone!" uttered Esther.

"And we, too!" responded Marina.

With painfully hushed hearts the two girls stood, clasped in each other's arms; and thus they silently awaited the denouement of the attack. Heavy feet were busy overhead, and the sound of voices reached the apartment. Esther knew they were searching for the movable slab. Her eyes were fixed upon the spot where it opened, and ere long a bright moonbeam fell across the way before her. The cool air struck up on her face, and the slab was thrown entirely back.

The girls shrank back to the extremity of the place, and while they stood trembling there, half a dozen soldiers descended the marble steps, led on by Warnam, one of the king's chief officers.

"If I mistake not, I address the daughter of Kison Ludim," remarked the officer, as he advanced towards the spot where the girls stood, like lambs awaiting the sacrifice.

"That old man was my father," answered Marina, almost taking hope from the kind and deferential manner in which the officer spoke.

"Then I must ask you to accompany me to the king's palace."

"Oh, no! You will not tear me away from here," cried the poor girl, sinking upon her knees, and clasping her hands in supplication.

"I have no choice in the matter, lady," returned Warnam, taking a step forward and laying his hand upon Marina's arm. "Your maid can accompany you if you like."

"Of course I shall attend her," replied Esther.

"Oh, you will not take us hence," urged Marina. "I am a poor, defenceless orphan, and you should not trample upon such."

"The king must be obeyed," sternly answered the officer. "To him you can unfold the tale of your grievances, but I cannot stop to hear them now. Come. If you have aught here that you wish to take with you, you may now collect it."

"I have nothing but my own liberty, and that you will take!" groaned Marina, in heart-broken accents.

"No, no, lady," rejoined Warnam, somewhat moved by the beauty and distress of the poor girl; "if there be guilt in the deed, lay it not to me, for God knows I seek not your misery. The king must be obeyed. Come; we have not longer to wait."

Marina saw that further persuasion would be useless, and with a heavy heart she gave her hand to Esther, and ascended the stone steps. When they landed upon the pavement above they found half a dozen more soldiers in waiting, and



they saw, too, how the entrance had been effected. Near the spot lay a ponderous beam which had been used as a battering-ram, and the pedestal was found to have been merely overturned.

As the party were arranged upon the outside, part of them walked in front of the girls, and part of them in the rear, while Warnam kept along by their side. No words were spoken on the way, save an occasional order from the officer to his soldiers, and ever and anon a deep sob from Marina that seemed to echo the heavy tread of the men. She spoke not, for she knew it would be of no use. She could only think of the wretched fate that awaited her. Life she might have given up with complacency; but to be robbed thus of all that made life valuable, was to keep her alive to feed upon the bitterest dregs of existence—chained to misery with a bleeding heart, with only the privilege of looking back upon the joys of which she had been forever robbed.

Swiftly the soldiers passed on, and at a point some fifty rods to the southward of the tall column they found their barge. They had been wise enough not to land where those who had come over in the small boat—one of which they knew to be Strato—could detect their craft.

“Their comes a vessel up through the straits,” remarked one of the soldiers, pointing off the southern entrance of the narrow way between the city and the mainland.

“Some merchant from Arabia,” carelessly responded Warnam, as he caught sight of the vessel.

No further notice was taken of the sail, and having handed the girls into the barge, the soldiers were stationed at the oars, and soon afterwards they were heading towards the city. The vessel which had been made out entering the straits was now standing boldly up, and Warnam entertained some doubts of being able to make his way ahead of her. She had a fair wind, and was cutting through the water swiftly.

“That is not a Tyrian vessel,” said one of the men.

“No,” remarked another; “she looks more like a Cyprian.”

“If she were bound for one of our harbors, she would stand in towards the island,” said the first speaker.

“You may ease your oars,” uttered Warnam, as he stood up in the stern of the barge and looked off towards where the vessel was coming upon them. “She will pass quietly by,” he added, though the peculiar tones of his voice expressed a slight doubt of the probability of his assertion.

The moonlight was so vivid that the men could be plainly distinguished upon the stranger’s deck, and shortly afterwards, while yet the barge lay nearly motionless in the water, a rattling was heard among her rigging, and in a moment more her course was slightly changed.

“By the power of Jupiter,” ejaculated one of the soldiers; “she’s coming directly upon us.”

“See those men!—see the glistening of their breast-plates! She’s a Cyprian corsair!”

“In with your oars!” shouted Warnam, as the truth of this last remark flashed upon him. “Pull back for the coast!”

The men obeyed the command; but they soon found that they had been too late in their movements, for by the time the head of the barge was turned, the stranger was hard upon them.

“What barge is that?” hailed some one from the vessel.

“The king’s,” returned Warnam.

“Then stop while I overhaul you.”

Without an order from their officer the soldiers raised their oars from the water, for they were afraid of a shower of arrows if they kept on.

The vessel was clumsily hove-to, by bringing one of the lumbering sails into the wind and casting loose the sheets of the other, and then the barge was ordered to row alongside.

“You will not of course detain us,” said Warnam, as he caught a line which had been thrown to him, “for we are on a mission for the king.”

“We shall see first whether you are worth detaining,” laconically replied the captain of the Cyprian, leaning over the side to get a view at the interior of the barge.



“But the king, sir, will not brook interference.”

“He may do as he likes on that score,” responded he of the vessel; “but to tell you the plain truth, I like the looks of your men, and more especially of those girls, so you may step on board.”

The craft was indeed a Cyprian corsair, and Warnam knew that resistance would be utterly useless; so he made his way on board, and then ordered his men to hand up the girls.

The corsair’s crew consisted of about fifty men, and from the appearance of things about the deck had on board quite a valuable cargo. The soldiers trembled with fear when they came over the side, and silently they awaited the decision of their fate.

“Be not alarmed, fair lady,” gallantly spoke the corsair captain, as he stepped forward, and gazed into the face of Marina.

“No alarm can add to my sufferings now,” returned she, in a despondent tone.

“Ha, then you were a prisoner—you were forced to your aquatic voyage?”

“She was for the king,” explained Warnam.

“What! Does the old dotard feast upon such beauty as they?”

“A wife for the young prince, sir,” continued the officer.

“Then I think the young prince will have to go brideless till he finds another. And you, my pretty one,” continued the corsair, turning to Esther, “are the lady’s maid, I suppose?”

“Yes, sir,” returned Esther, with considerable firmness.

“Then you shall both be cared for.”

“But to what end?” asked Marina, as a fearful thought flashed through her mind—a thought more dreadful than the idea of wedding the prince.

“That will appear anon,” coolly answered the captain; and then turning to his crew, he ordered the barge to be cut adrift, and the vessel to be put on her course.

As soon as the corsair was once more standing up through the straits, the soldiers were deprived of their arms, and told that they might make themselves at home around the forecastle; while the girls were conducted to the captain's cabin, which was a sort of house built upon the quarter-deck, with a narrow walk around it upon the outside.

Warnam gazed off upon the moonlit city, and as its tall domes and spires gradually receded from his view, he began to think upon the dreamy fate before him, and that fate he well knew. He knew that the corsairs were in the habit of kidnapping people, and selling them into the service of warring chieftains, and that this made one of the most lucrative items in their profession, and already he felt the load upon his devoted back. He cursed the hour that sent him upon the mission for the king, and he cursed the poor girl who had been the innocent cause of all. Then he cursed the armorer, and finally when the last glimmer of moonlight could be seen upon the turrets of Tyre no more, he settled into a moody silence, from which even the questions of his companions could not arouse him.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## FATE'S VISTA GROWS DARKER AND DARKER.

THE fair Marina reclined upon a low couch in the corsair's cabin, and at her feet reclined Esther. Both had been weeping, though the tears of the latter had left but little vestige of their tracks. A small lamp was suspended from the ceiling, and by its dim rays the girls were enabled to take a view of the things about them. The place exhibited a strange mixture of the rough and the polished, the homely and the sumptuous. In one corner stood a large stack of javelins, while hanging about upon the sides, over the damask couches, were quite a number of spears and bows, with steel-headed arrows.

Marina gazed about upon the quaint articles and their arrangement, and for a moment her grief became almost lost in a sea of troubled wonder; but gradually a sickening sensation crept through her frame, and she felt faint and weak. The strange motion of the vessel was new to her, and beneath its influence she sank into a state of utter disregard for things about her. Her head grew dizzy, objects seemed to swim before her, her hands fell listless at her side, and, all unconscious of the efforts of Esther to revive her, she sank back upon the couch and forgot that she lived.

It was bright morning when the fair daughter of Kison Ludim awoke from her unconsciousness, and, strange as it may seem, when she felt the fresh air her seasickness had nearly passed away. There was wine upon a rough side-board, the bottles being confined by small cords fastened to the side of the cabin and looped around them, and of this Esther persuaded her mistress to drink. The portion

somewhat revived her, and as the generous warmth began to creep through her frame, her scattered senses came together again, and she knew where she was and what she had suffered.

The sun had crept over the rugged coast, and its bright, warm beams leaped through the latticed windows of the cabin and dwelt upon the arms that hung against the opposite partition. Marina saw the golden flood, but the sight made her more sad and gloomy, for the contrast was stronger, and the light seemed but to reveal more plainly her own miseries. The corsair captain had spoken kindly to her, but she feared that it was the kindness of self-interest. The fearful picture of fate that arose before her was worse, far worse, than that to which King Mapen would have consigned her, and an involuntary cry of pain broke from her lips as she called the picture to her mind.

Esther had ceased endeavoring to console her mistress, for she could find no consolation to offer; and besides, she was herself now a sufferer. She had been torn from a kind father, and her fate was not less certain than was that of Marina.

Thus they both sat, sometimes buried in deep, melancholy reflection, and anon murmuring their thoughts aloud, till nearly noon. They were wondering why they were thus left alone, when the door opened, and gave entrance to the corsair. He was a dark-looking man, with a countenance expressive of daring and cunning, and shadowed by a sort of slantwise look of calculating cupidity. For several moments he stood and regarded his fair prisoners in silence. A pleased, satisfied look rested upon his features as he realized the rare beauty of Marina, and taking a step forward, he said:—

“I trust, ladies, you will not accuse me of neglect, for I knew that you had everything here necessary for your comfort.”

Marina gazed sadly up into her captor's face, but she spoke not.



"You look much better than I expected to have found you," continued the captain. "The sea agrees with you. However, your voyage will be at an end by to-morrow morning, at the furthest."

Again Marina looked up, and at length her tongue found utterance.

"Oh, where do you think of taking us, sir?" she asked, half starting up from her seat, and bending earnestly forward.

"I am bound to Tarsus."

"And what do you there? What—what is to be my fate?"

"One so beautiful as you should secure a good fate, certainly."

Marina shuddered.

"But tell us what that fate is to be," exclaimed Esther.

"That I can hardly tell," returned the corsair, regarding the girls with sparkling eyes.

"You know your own purpose," persisted Esther.

"Oh, yes, I know what I shall do; but then fate is something I don't pretend to read," answered the man, with a dubious expression of countenance.

"One thing tell me, sir," exclaimed Marina, starting to her feet as she spoke; "do you intend to—to"—

Her voice failed her, and covering her face with her hands, she sank back upon the couch.

"What would you have asked?" uttered the corsair, not at all moved by what he had seen.

"She would have asked, sir, if you intend to sell us?" said Esther, with forced energy.

"Well," returned the captain, in a sort of calculating manner, "it isn't often that I get such a prize as this, and I am inclined to the opinion that I shall make the most of it, now that it is in my hands. But you need not fear; I won't sell you to a life of drudgery."

These words fell like a thunderbolt upon the ears of poor Marina, and as their meaning went rolling to her heart the

very blood that coursed there seemed frozen in its channels. She realized the whole at once, for 'twas the same fearful thought that had filled her mind with its terrors since she had come on board the vessel. No tears came to her relief, for those gentle streams were frozen up at the fountain, and her grief found vent only in the deep throes of her heaving bosom. At length she raised her eyes to the face of the man before her. He did not look ugly, nor did he look like a remorseless tyrant. Her lips parted, and she sank upon her knees.

“Oh, spare me!” she cried. “Carry me back to Tyre, and you shall receive more than you can possibly realize elsewhere.”

“No, no, my lady; I'll not run myself into the jaws of the king.”

“I meant not the king, sir. There is another in Tyre who will pay my ransom a thousand fold. Oh, I would not be delivered up to the king.”

“I fear I cannot grant your request,” said the corsair, with a shake of his head. “I should hardly dare to venture back to Tyre.”

“Will you not listen to my prayers?” still cried the poor girl, clinging to her captor's knees. “I am of gentle blood—I am an orphan. Oh, do not sell me into cruel bondage! Kill me, sir! Oh, kill me, but do not make me more miserable than I am now!”

“You must not think me over-cruel, fair lady, but you only waste words in urging me thus, for I cannot let you go. You place altogether too much importance upon the affair, and you may rest assured that your lot will not be a hard one. You shall go to one who will keep you like a lady as you are.”

“Oh, cruel, cruel! I would rather work, toil, spin, dig even in the field, than share the lot you paint!”

The corsair raised Marina to her feet, and she fell back upon her couch. The bold man regarded her for a moment, and then said:—



“There is one favor I will grant.”

The poor girl opened her eyes.

“You shall both be sold to the same person.”

Marina closed her eyes and groaned aloud. The promise included a boon, but she had hoped for more.

“If you want anything,” continued he, you can touch yonder bell, and your summons shall be immediately answered. I trust when I see you again, I shall find you in better spirits.”

As the captain thus spoke, he turned and left the place.

“Is it not dreadful?” murmured Marina, as she gazed into the tear-wet face of her faithful companion.

“’Tis indeed,” uttered Esther; “but let us not give way entirely to despair. There yet may be hope.”

“And upon what can you hang it?”

“If we both go together—and I think the man will keep his promise—we may find some means of escape.”

“That is a faint hope, Esther.”

“Let us cherish it, at least.”

“I will try.”

“But let us make up our minds that we will live only for escape.”

Esther had fairly worked herself into the hope she would picture, and even Marina began to gain strength of mind to bear up under the disaster that had befallen her. She felt herself to be drowning, and she had caught at the straw that floated past.

The day had passed slowly and heavily away, and when night fell down again upon the sea the girls called for the first time for food. It was speedily brought, and as they appeased their hunger they felt better and stronger, though of course their grief knew no rest. Marina could but think of her lover—of his distress, and of his agony, and in that one corner of her soul, where his image was sacredly enshrined, she felt a pang that even hope could not cure.

Daylight came again, and ere long the poor girls knew that the vessel had reached the harbor, for they heard the

rattling of the sails and the ropes as they swung loosely against the masts, and they felt the low tremulousness of the vessel as the anchor was let go. Then they knew they were swinging about, and when they cast their eyes out at the window they found that they had entered the mouth of a river, for there was land upon both hands, and a large city loomed up in the distance. Their morning's meal was brought to them, and while they were eating it, Esther remarked:—

“Now, Marina, we have seen enough of our captor to know that his mind is made up, and that no persuasions or entreaties of ours can turn him. Let us, then, offer no resistance, for the more quietly we submit, the more easy will be our treatment, and the less shall we be watched.”

“I know your counsel is good, and that you speak the truth,” returned Marina, her eyes now filling with tears; “but oh, how can one submit to such a fate?”

“We must submit,” philosophically replied Esther.

“Indeed we must, but I cannot look upon it calmly, even to appearances.”

“But you will promise not to resist?”

“Of course I should not do that. I am too weak, too broken-hearted, for resistance. They may lead me to my death, if they choose.”

“Say not so.”

“But I feel so.”

“Then away with the feeling. When first I found myself torn from my father, my heart sank within me, but I have plucked it up again, and now it is strong enough to plot for that freedom of which they would rob us. Courage, Marina, courage.”

There was something persuasive in the tone and manner of the armorer's daughter, for she possessed a good share of her father's firmness, and by no means a small share of his cunning. She placed her arms around her companion's neck as she spoke, and gazed up with such an imploring look, that Marina could not resist the spell, and ere she knew it, hope had half nestled itself in her bosom.



“Promise me that you will be firm,” continued Esther.

“I will try,” replied Marina, with more confidence than she had expressed for a long time.

“Then you will succeed,” and thus speaking Esther wiped the tears from the face of her fair mistress.

It was nearly noon when the corsair captain called for the girls to attend him on deck, and as they passed out, they could not but feel a sense of momentary pleasure at the beauty of the scenery that lay spread out about them. They were a few miles up the Cydnus river, in the midst of one of the gardens of that world. The Tyrian soldiers had been already sent on shore, and now they were to follow. A sumptuous barge was alongside, beneath the silken canopy of which they were soon seated, and in a few moments more the unfortunate girls were passing swiftly on in the path of their strange destiny.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A STARTLING INTERVIEW, AND STRANGE FEARS.

MAPEN, king of Tyre, was in a dark, gloomy mood. The very gods seemed to have conspired against him. It was nearly noon on the day succeeding the capture of the barge; messengers had been sent to the coast in quest of the soldiers, and they had returned, bringing intelligence of the strange opening of the subterranean apartment beneath the ruins of the old temple, and of the disappearance of the party who had been sent in quest of the girls. The barge had been picked up a little to the north of the city by some fishermen, and the report of that, also, had reached the monarch's ears. He stood leaning against one of the pillars of his audience chamber, but all visitors were shut out. He was not in the mood to render judgment, for the inexplicable failure of his plans with regard to the daughter of Ludim, had crushed every cooler feeling in his bosom.

"Phalis," he said at length, turning to his son, who stood near him, "if Gio be once more in my power, he shall not escape me. He is at the bottom of this affair."

"So I think," returned the prince; "but I fear he cannot be taken. The strange manner in which he escaped from the centurion and his guard is to me a mystery."

"He must have some secret hiding-place which the soldiers did not find."

"That is impossible, for, according to the centurion's account, he must have gone up the stairs, and there is no way under heaven of escape or concealment except by the way of the tops of the adjoining houses, and that pass was securely guarded. And there is another thing that seems strange, and that is, the presence of the priest of Hercules there."



“That may be easily accounted for,” returned the king. “The armorer does all the work in metals for the temple, and Balbec was probably there on that account, for he could have nothing further with an humble artizan.”

“That is probably the case, but yet, from what intelligence I can gain of the armorer, there is something almost passing credit in his affairs.”

“Ah,” uttered the king, with some surprise in his manner, “have you learned anything about him that is so strange?”

“Yes,” returned the prince, “there are some most strange things concerning him. Many years ago—fifteen, some tell me, while others say it is more—Gio voluntarily let himself to old Strato, for a quantity of gold with which to make ornaments for the temple of Hercules, and it is asserted that in consideration of that sacrifice, the god has taken him under especial favor. And so it would seem, for many are the accounts of his marvelous disappearances and re-appearances about the city, and even our own experience tells us that some strange power protects him. To tell you the truth, father, I begin to fear the man.”

“No, no, my son, ’tis not for us to fear the armorer. I shall yet hope to entrap him. There is some deception in all this, for I think the armorer owes more to his personal prowess than to aught else. If I can learn of his whereabouts, I will surely have him arrested.”

“Well,” returned Phalis, after a few moments of reflection, “then the sooner ’tis done the better, and on the whole I think it best that he should be secured.”

“Of course it is,” said the king, considerably reassured by the acquiescence of his son. “Pshaw! There’s nothing about the man so strange, after all. He’s powerful in the use of weapons, for they have been his playthings from youth, and he has secret friends, too, in the palace, else how could he have escaped from his dungeon? The next time I’ll have him watched by those whom I can trust—I’ll keep him till we gain possession of Ludim’s daughter, and then he shall die.”

Mapen started from the pillar against which he had been leaning and walked across the apartment. His step was such a one as a man takes when he thinks to clinch a resolution.

"Phalis," he continued, in a calmer tone, "you may have my slaves sent in, and if there be any without who desire audience, they may be admitted."

The prince had turned to obey his father's request, but ere he had passed half the distance between the throne and the entrance-way, the door was suddenly thrown open, and the eyes of the astounded king and prince rested upon the stalwart form of Gio! He bore in his hand a naked sword, and his face was moved by a powerful emotion. He looked as black as midnight in his fierce wrath, and the very air that hung about him seemed laden with the iron purpose that nerved him to meet the monarch.

Mapen made a motion as if to call for his slaves. It was a weak, a fluttering motion, but yet its import was plain.

"Move not at the peril of your lives!" uttered Gio, in a hoarse whisper. "I mean you no harm, nor will I take harm from you. I knew you were alone, and I have come to ask you a simple question."

"But the guards—how passed you them?" asked the king, whose mind instinctively turned upon the strangeness of such a circumstance, in spite of the tumultuous fear which he now experienced.

"I passed them by a power they knew not of. None heeded my presence, for none dreamed that Gio was nigh."

Again Phalis started towards the door, but a simple look from the formidable intruder was sufficient to arrest his steps.

The king began to see that he was fairly entrapped, and though his wrath was great, yet his fear was greater, for well he knew that one single sweep of that fearful sword would prove his death warrant. There was that in the fiercely burning eye of the armorer, which told him of a purpose not to be shaken, and as an emperor might quail before a crouched lion or a wakened tiger, so did the monarch



of Tyre quail before one of his own subjects. No slaves were at hand to do his bidding, no soldiers to strike the blow he had not the power to strike himself.

"What seek you?" he at length asked, while he made a motion to Phalis to remain quiet.

"I have come to ask you what you have done with the daughter of Kison Ludim?"

"That is the same question I would have asked of thee," returned the king, with a sudden start.

"Do not lie to me, King Mapen. Where have you placed the fair Marina?"

"Nowhere. She is not in my power."

"Did you not send soldiers last night to hang upon my tracks?"

"I sent soldiers to watch the course of young Strato."

"Ay, and they found the lady, and dragged her forth from her resting place. Now, king, tell me where she is?"

"I know not."

"Beware!" pronounced Gio, while a spark from his burning eye seemed to penetrate to the very soul of the monarch.

"I have not seen her," persisted the king, who was now surprised in turn. "This morning some fishermen picked up my barge at sea, but not a soul was in it. I had been sure 'twas your work."

"Then they may have all been drowned," muttered Gio to himself, for there was something in the manner of the king that gave assurance that he spoke the truth.

"No, that cannot be," said Mapen, for the fishermen assured me that the barge had not been overturned, nor was there any disarrangement of its furniture."

Again Gio bent upon the king one of those keen, searching looks, but he could read nothing save simple truth and honest wonder.

"Then I fear their fate is sealed," he said, in a half despondent tone. "Some corsair has picked them up."

"Then I'll rake the earth till I find them!" cried the king, "or, at least, till I find the daughter of Kison Ludim."

"You'll find her not, sire," returned Gio, with a spice of irony in his tone. "'Tis you who have brought this on her, and you had now better let the matter drop."

"But I will find her, even though every vessel in my navy be called into requisition."

"Then you may make the trial," uttered the armorer, while a peculiar light broke upon his countenance. "And," he added, seeming to have checked some words that had arisen to his lips, "I hope you will succeed."

Mapen started at these words, for he thought he detected some meaning, and once more the king arose above the man.

"I will find her, and I'll keep her, too," he exclaimed; "and as for you, sir, your head is not worth the bond of a day. You shall learn what it is to beard a king!"

Gio smiled as the monarch thus spoke, and a ray of something very much like pity shot athwart his face. Mapen saw that look, and he could not but wonder at its strangeness.

"I pray the gods that you may find her," said the armorer. "And now," he continued, half turning towards the door, "I must leave you. I am satisfied you speak the truth, and for the present I will leave you to prosecute your search. Farewell."

"Hold!" cried Mapen, in whose bosom the spirit of curiosity suddenly burst forth. "Tell me, strange man, who and what you are."

"One who could read your destiny if he chose," returned Gio, stopping and turning again towards the king.

"I ask not for what you can do, but for what you are?"

"I am Gio, the armorer of Tyre."

"But you are more than that."

"Ay, I am now the master of both a king and a prince."

Mapen grasped the small dagger he wore in his girdle, and Phalis took a step forward; but even had it not been for that formidable sword they would not have moved further, for Gio's look alone restrained them. It was now terrific in its strange majesty.

"Farewell, Mapen; but believe me, we shall meet again."



The king offered no resistance—he moved not from his place as the armorer turned away, and, almost before he was aware of the fact, the wonderful man had gone!

“Arouse the guard! Stop him!” shouted Phalis, as the dying footfalls of the departing man broke the fearful charm that had bound him.

The guard came rushing towards the spot.

“Stop the armorer!” shouted Mapen.

“The armorer!” iterated the captain in astonishment.

“Ay—the armorer! Passed he not here?”

“No, sire.”

“Thou liest! He did, for he left here but a moment since,” fairly shrieked the king.

“Then he took your own private passage, sire.”

“Spring to the gates—secure every avenue leading from the palace!”

The soldiers leaped quickly to obey orders, but no Gio could be found—none had seen him enter or go away! Every nook and corner of the vast building were searched, but ’twas fruitless.

“’Tis strange,” murmured the king, as he stood trembling before his son.

“’Tis wonderful,” echoed Phalis, while a cold tremor shook his frame.

“Who can he be?”

“Not the man he appears.”

“But what does he appear?”

“I know not.”

“Neither do I.”

Both the royal parent and the son gazed upon each other in silence. Not only was there something alarming in the mysterious power of the armorer, but he seemed to have some strange connection with other matters that rested heavily on their minds. They wondered till they both were lost in the mazes of their own conjecture, and then they came back and dwelt upon the startling interview they had just held with the object of their doubts and fears.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE DEATH-SLEEP!

It was dark. Gio and young Strato sat within the latter's dwelling. The powerful armorer leaned his head upon his hand, and a single tear tickled down from beneath his fingers, and a close observer might have seen that his bosom was heaving with strong internal emotion. Strato's eyes were dry, but yet his face was full of anguish that came gushing up from his pain-stricken heart.

"Alas! we both have cause for sorrow," murmured Strato.

"Ay, and for deep sorrow, too."

Strato started at the sound of his voice, and gazed up to see if it were really his friend who had spoken. It was so deep, so strange, that it struck upon his ear with a startling effect. It was Gio, and in a moment more he returned:—

"You have lost a daughter, and I——oh, what a blow is this!"

"Courage, courage!" exclaimed Gio, starting up from his seat and brushing his hand over the spot where a few moments before had rested a tear. "Some kind power may yet befriend us. I have had darker clouds than this roll over my soul, and the sunlight has not failed to drive them away. The heart will throb, and the silent fountain of grief burst open its gates, but there's a future ahead, and he who is wise will look to it. Bury not yourself in useless repinings, but up and gird on the armor of a resolute determination. Strato, I'll not shed another tear till I find my child."

"Ah, Gio, you cannot feel as I feel."

"And why?"

"Your heart is more stubborn. Your life is different."



“Ay, my life has been different.”

Again young Strato started and gazed earnestly into the face of the armorer. What was it that moved him so? 'Twas surely Gio, and yet how strange, how nobly strange, sounded that voice. There was a fire in his eye he had never noticed there before, a swelling of the muscles that gave to the face a nobleness that did not use to be so.

Again Gio spoke.

“I must away now, for I fear I have another sad office on my hands. Oh, my heart is heavy! Fare thee well, Strato.”

“But whither, whither, good Gio?”

“To the temple.”

“So late you will not gain entrance.”

Gio's heavy brows curled with something like a dark smile. The muscles about the mouth twitched with a continuation of that smile, and then he turned away. He spoke not further, but silently he passed on into the darkness of the piazza, and then Strato heard his steps sound upon the pavement.

It was midnight in Tyre! a dark, cheerless midnight. The wind moaned through the streets, and a gloomy veil shut out the stars. Nature seemed weeping in tearless grief!

From out the great temple came a score of men, and they bore upon their shoulders a thing covered with sackcloth! With slow and solemn tread they crossed the vast Mosaic square, and then they turned towards the royal palace. Ebo, the king's chief officer, led the men, and he seemed anxious to walk more rapidly.

The gates of the palace were thrown open, and the party entered. The king heard the confusion, and he hurried to his marble hall. The men who bore the burden entered into the presence of their monarch, and there they sat it down. The light from large golden lamps fell in sombre streams upon the sackcloth, and with wondering mind Mapen awaited an explanation of the scene.

“Sire,” spoke Ebo, “we've brought him dead!”

“Who?” exclaimed both king and prince in concert.

Ebo pointed silently to the burden the soldiers had placed upon the pavement.

Mapen stepped forward and raised the cloth. It fell from his hold and slid off upon the floor. The beams of the golden lamps fell aslant the cold, stiff features of Gio! He lay there as quiet as a lamb, with his huge breast hushed from its heavings, and his lips closed in death. There had been no struggle in that death—no pain—for a half wreathing smile rested there, as though those now soundless ears had drank in an answer to the last prayer that escaped.

“The gods be praised for this!” ejaculated the monarch, as he half recoiled from the corpse. “But tell me, Ebo, where did you find him?”

“In the temple, sire.”

“Dead?”

“Yes.”

“But how? Explain.”

“As we passed the temple to-night in our rounds—perhaps an hour since—we heard the loud voice of the high priest, Balbec, supplicating the gods. The wide door was flung open, and as we saw lights streaming forth, we entered. At the foot of Hercules lay the corpse of Gio, and over him stood the priest. He told us that the armorer had died but a short time before, and that he had died calmly and quietly. Then he bade us bring the body to the palace, where it must remain till he came to see it.”

“But why such a strange request as that?” asked the king, in astonishment, still gazing fixedly upon the cold features of the dead man.

“He said this man was favored of the gods, and that you should pay all honor to his remains. The oracle spoke while we stood there, and it said, ‘Obey!’”

“That is more strange than all,” murmured the king. “Yet it shall be obeyed. I shall weep not over the cause.”

“Father,” said the prince, stepping nearer to the body, and regarding its face with a wistful look; “I wish those lips



could have told their secret ere they had been closed forever, for 'tis no common tale that's now locked up in that cold bosom."

"I believe you, my son."

"Perhaps the high priest may know it all," suggested Ebo.

"Ha, so it may be. I thought not of that. When comes he, Ebo?"

"He said not, sire; but it must be ere long, for he will take charge of the body and embalm it. He only said he wished the body to remain here till he came."

"Perhaps 'twas to assure us that the man was dead," said Phalis.

"So you may be right."

"The priest said you would like to see the corpse," added Ebo.

"Good, he spoke the truth," returned the monarch, now gaining more courage to gaze upon the face of the dead.

"But yet, sire," ventured the officer, "I think he bore you not much good will as he spoke."

"Ha!" uttered Mapen, starting at this hint. "What said he?"

"'Twas not what he said, sire; but in the manner he spoke. He expressed great love for Gio, and when your name rested upon his lips, 'twas with a scoffing sound, and a fire burned in his eyes."

"He cannot harm me, so let him scoff. Though I may not lay a finger upon the high priest of Hercules, yet he cannot clash with the crown, so there we are even. If he scoffs, I can pass him by. His person is not too sacred for cool disregard."

"Treat him not roughly in your speech," said Phalis; "for with such a prize as this we can well boot a little of priestly tongue; and beside," continued the prince, lowering his voice to a whisper, "the priest of Hercules has greater room in the hearts of the people than has the king!"

Mapen started as though a point of steel had entered his side, for he knew there was truth in what he had heard.

“Come, Phalis,” he said at length, “let us retire.” Then turning to his officer, he continued, while he gazed again upon the rigid face of the corpse:—

“Let it remain here to-night, Ebo. Draw the cloth over the face, and watch you by it till morning. He was stolen from you when alive, see if you can keep your charge now that he is dead!”

As the king and prince departed, Ebo drew the coarse cloth up over the form of Gio, and then closed and bolted the door. Some of the lamps were extinguished, and then the men divided themselves for equal watches during the remainder of the night. They walked silently up and down the large vaulted department, and cold shudders crept through them as their eyes rested upon that coarse pall. Dim spectres seemed flitting around through the air, and low, moaning murmurs fell through the stillness. Close and more closely gathered those who held the watch to the sides of their slumbering companions, and there they stood and gazed upon the dark thing they were set to guard.



## CHAPTER XVI.

BEN-SAUL.

IT was high noon in the city of Tarsus. Leading from the Periopolis was the grand bazaar of the Cilician and Perisian merchants, in one corner of which, where the way was cleared by guarded copper chains, was a raised platform covered with white linen. It was only some ten feet square, and raised five feet from the ground. A canopy of crimson stuff was suspended overhead to keep off the hot rays of the sun, and, perhaps, also to answer a second object, for this was the stand where the female captives were offered for sale, and the crimson canopy with the pure white of the carpeting could not fail of lending a lustre to female charms.

There were only two occupants of the stand at the present time. One stood, in a trembling, shrinking attitude, while the other knelt humbly at the other's feet. This position denoted the ranks of the two females. The first was Marina, and the other Esther!

Coarse-looking men stood outside of the copper chain; men of the first class stood there, the young men stood there, all feasting their eyes upon the beauty of those two unfortunate girls, for now that they both stood—or one stood and the other knelt—there together, there was loveliness alike in each. Both were different, yet both were beautiful. Esther looked like a goddess of resignation, with her mild blue eyes cast imploringly up into the face of her companion, as though she would have said, "Be you, too, resigned." The other looked the more proud—the burning shame sank deeper to her soul—her face was scorched with tearless misery, and she showed in her every wayward glance and attitude how far she had fallen. I say she looked the more proud; she showed the pride which circumstances may never obliterate from the countenance that has through life drawn its light from her heart of virtue and truth, and which crimsoned with the tide of noble blood. Esther—poor Esther, felt shame—she felt misery and degradation, but she had longer been the child of circumstance, and she bore up with the more fortitude under this new trial.

There was a movement among the crowd outside of the cabin. One man passed through the narrow entrance, stood a few moments at the foot of the platform, and then passed back. Soon there came another, and then another. Each gazed scrutinizingly upon the shrinking girls, and then went back and talked with the corsair captain who stood outside. At length one man talked long and earnestly with the corsair, and then the latter came up to the stand and told the girls they might come down. They dropped their veils, and then they followed their captor. He led them across the bazaar to the office of a scribe, whither they were followed by a Cilician merchant, who had bargained for them both.

Writings were soon made out—the corsair received a bag of gold, and his eyes sparkled as he clutched the treasure. Marina and Esther were sold!

Ben-Saul, the merchant who had purchased the Tyrian girls, was a good-looking man, and though he had passed the meridian of life, yet he looked with a good degree of admiration upon the charms of the fair Marina. He spoke kind words to them both, and assured them that they should be well cared for, and then turning towards the door he bade them follow him. The girls hesitated not to obey, for they well knew the strength of the chains that bound them.

The merchant led the way to the river, where a gorgeously trapped barge was in waiting, into which the new-bought slaves were handed. A dozen oarsmen sat ready to obey the orders of Ben-Saul, and as the latter stepped on board, the barge was shoved off, and in a moment more the cool, sparkling waters of the Cydnus were clearing before her sharp bows.

The sunbeams danced upon the waters, and the shady orange groves upon the banks lent a thousand sweets to the air, and so lovely, so enticing was the scene, that Marina could not but raise her veil and gaze about upon the picture nature had painted there. Birds of many colors flitted to and fro and warbled a welcome to the fair strangers, while many a bold, confiding dove came and rested upon the sides of the awning.

“This is lovely,” uttered Esther, as she laid one hand upon her companion’s arm. Her voice was low and sweet, and she seemed entirely buried in the scene that had called forth her remark.

Marina was prepared for this remark, for her own mind had been in the same channel, but the moment the remark was made the charm was broken. The tale of the scenery had been told, the acknowledgment of its loveliness had



been made, and with a simple, "It is, indeed," she burst into tears.

"Do not let Ben-Saul see you weep," said Esther, in a low, urging tone.

"'Tis fit he should see me," returned Marina, "for he must know I cannot be silent."

"Speak not so loud, Marina, for I would not have our master hear us."

"Master!" repeated Marina, with a cold shudder.

"Yes, he is our master, and if we would be free we must be cautious. Try to cultivate the love of him who owns us."

"Oh, heavens! His love! The gods preserve me from it," uttered Marina, in a shrill whisper. "You cannot be in earnest, Esther. To have his love would be to court my own ruin. I will tend his oxen, his sheep, his vintage—I will carry his burdens, and be his lowest menial, but his love,—oh, never."

"You misunderstand me, Marina. I mean that you shall so deport towards him that he will think you reconciled to your fate. If he thinks you look with favor upon him—that you respect and honor him, he will make allowance for your maiden modesty, and he will assuredly allow you time to become reconciled to the novelty of your situation. He will not be unkind nor harsh, if he thinks you capable of returning his affection, for he will surely love you—who could help it?"

Esther gazed earnestly into her companion's face as she spoke, and Marina's eyes trembled with a faint light as she received the unbought compliment.

"If you could do this," continued Esther, "we might contrive some means of escape. Love is powerful in making old men blind, and with that talisman alone can we work, for once kindle his dislike and your fate is sealed. See you not what I mean?"

"Yes."

"Then will you not comply?"

"I fear I cannot hide my heart."

"You shall not hide it."

"Shall not?"

"No," returned Esther, with a sudden animation, while her eyes sparkled with a new thought. "Look around upon the beauties that nature has spread out—admire Ben-Saul's gardens and riches, and then let that sweet smile come upon your countenance. Hide not your heart. Strengthen it with resolution to escape—let it beat with the hope of freedom, and with that hope be cheerful. Hope within, beauty without!

Come, Marina, raise your veil once more, and look up with a smile. He will think you live in the present; our star of joy is in the future."

The language—the tone—the thrilling eloquence, and, withal, the hope, that thus fell upon Marina's ear reached her soul, and its influence was as sudden as it was powerful. She raised her veil, and she looked into the face of Esther; there was such a light of gratitude upon her fair features that the speaker knew that she succeeded.

The storm-tossed mariner feels his frail bark sinking beneath him—the angry wind howls above him—the cold grave yawns beneath him, and naught but the utter blackness of impenetrable night rests upon his sight. He shuts his eyes in horror and despair—then sinks upon his knees and resigns himself to the God of tempest. He feels a shock—the winds change to a thrilling whisper—the waters roll back from the fabric that supports him, and when he opens his eyes he finds that the flood has cast him upon a rocky coast. All around is barren and drear, and all would be as black as before, were it not that a single star has peeped out from a spot of blue where the clouds have rolled apart. His feet touch the hard rock, and he hopes there is a welcome rest somewhere beyond the rugged foothold he has gained. He is not yet saved, but with a lighter heart, a sparkling hope, and a smile of gratitude, he starts forward to see if he may not find some home of humanity. He thinks not of danger—he dwells not upon the cheerless rocks that raise their bleak heads about him, but he has seized upon the thought of green fields in the distance, and, till the sun shall rise, he trusts to the guidance of that single twinkling star, and smiles back its beams as he travels onward.

Thus felt the fair Marina, and she did smile back the beams of her companion's hope as she resolved to follow her counsel.

Ben-Saul gazed in rapture upon the unveiled face of his fair girl, and when he saw the smile that made it a thousand times more lovely, he arose from where he sat and stepped beneath the silken canopy.

"Fair girl," he said, as he took a seat by her side, "you were never on the Cyndus before?"

"No, sir," returned Marina, slightly trembling, and dropping her eyes.

"Is it not a beautiful place?"

"It is, indeed, sir."

"Only a short distance further on is my own residence. It is far more beautiful than any you have yet seen. My



gardens are full of the sweetest flowers, the choicest fruits grow upon my trees, and the cool fountains play around my palace. Think you you can be happy there?"

Marina hesitated, but at that moment she felt a gentle pressure from the hand of Esther, and her resolution came back to her aid. Her master had spoken kindly, affectionately, and looking up into his face with a half melancholy, half hopeful expression, she returned:—

"I hope I may be happy, sir."

"You shall, you shall," uttered Ben-Saul, and taking her fair, white hand he pressed it to his lips. "You shall have all that can make you so. You shall be my chosen, chiefest wife—the light of my dwelling, and the joy of my heart. Servants shall be yours, and your own companion here shall keep you company. I will care for you as though you were the apple of my eye."

Again Marina felt the pressure of Esther's hand.

"You are kind, sir, very kind," she replied, in a calm tone; "and though to be torn from my home is galling and bitter, yet hope bids me not look on the dark phases of my life-picture. If I am weak, you will bear with me; if I am sad, you will forgive me, and time may bring the bloom of joy back to my cheek."

She looked imploringly into her master's face as she spoke, and oh, she did look beautiful, transcendently so. Her large blue eyes beamed with a soft, liquid light, her bosom swelled with the resolution it held, and her features were played upon by the warm blood that coursed beneath her pure white skin. The gentle breeze of heaven that swept through the canopied pavilion played with her light, glossy ringlets, and they looked like fine golden rings trembling on a bed of alabaster. Ben-Saul's face trembled beneath the power of admiration and love, and after gazing for a moment in silence upon her, he feelingly uttered:—

"No bloom more lovely can rest upon your cheek—no look more kind can find its home there. By the heavens above me, you shall be happy."

He pressed one more kiss upon the hand he held, and then he returned to his former station, for the barge had now turned its head towards a spot upon the bank where a flight of marble steps led down to the water, beyond which, rising amid luxurious gardens and groves of myrtles, oranges and cypresses, stood the dwelling of the rich merchant.

"Did I not tell you he would surely love you?" whispered Esther.

"Yes, yes."

"I knew he would, else he would not have bought you. Now beware, Marina, for oh, such love as his—so ardent, so passionate—can be kindled to a hatred most fierce. Hope on, he is blind now, and may be made blinder still."

"I will," murmured Marina.

Ere long the two girls stepped from the barge, ascended the marble steps, and then entered the avenue leading to the palace. Ben-Saul had not overrated the beauty of the place, for all that wealth and taste could procure were spread about in abundance, and the scene seemed indeed a very picture of paradise. To one who had been reared within the walls of Tyre the scene was most strikingly beautiful, and for the moment Marina almost forgot that she was a captive.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CONCEALED WATCHER.

EYE cannot picture a scene more lovely than that which greeted the eyes of Marina and Esther on the morning following their introduction into the palace of Ben-Saul. The apartment where they had slept seemed more like the divan of some Indian monarch than like a sleeping chamber, and the rich perfumes that ladened the atmosphere seemed like the grateful incense of nature to her God. They performed their ablutions at a fountain of sweet-scented waters that gushed up from a marble basin in an adjoining apartment, and then went forth to the open closet that overlooked the gardens. The sun had arisen in glorious splendor, and its warming beams were drinking up the gentle dew-drops that lay like diamonds upon the flowers and trees.

"Oh, that such a spot should be the scene of such misery as mine!" uttered Marina, as her eyes ran over the picture.

"Ah," returned Esther, "you forget. We are not to repine yet. Such a scene should inspire us with hope."



Marina started and gazed into the face of her companion.

"I rather feel," she said, "that it must make me more sad, for its contrast makes more dark my cruel fate."

"Beware, Marina. You promised me that you would cherish a different feeling. Do not allow yourself to blame Ben-Saul, for he means to do all in his power to make us happy. Think not of him, but of those who are far away."

It was a kind reproof, and Marina could not but feel its justness. She threw her arms about her companion's neck and thanked her, and once more her resolution was firm. She saw that the mere act of Ben-Saul was not unkind, but rather she saw that he would be all kindness to her in his own intent. For some time she gazed around upon the gardens, and while she yet sought new objects of interest, Esther's hand was laid suddenly upon her arm. She turned an inquiring look upon her companion, and found that her eyes were fixed earnestly upon a clump of myrtles that grew upon the edge of a marble walk which flanked a jetting fountain.

"What see you, Esther?"

"Look towards those myrtles," answered she, without moving her eyes; but at the same time pointing with her hand.

"I do, but I see nothing."

"Wait a moment."

"But what saw you?"

"A man."

"I have seen a dozen in different parts of the garden since I stood here."

"Yes, but this one has been watching us for some time."

"He is curious, I suppose, to see strangers," said Marina, without having yet bestowed any other thought upon the subject.

"His curiosity is of a deeper kind than that," returned Esther, turning her eyes from the myrtle grove, and regarding Marina with an earnest look. "When first I saw him he was standing upon the edge of the fountain, almost hidden from sight behind that clump of aloes, but the moment he seemed to catch my eye, he left that station, and went behind the myrtles, where he has been ever since. 'Twas by accident he caught my eye, though, for he had been watching you."

"What looked he like?" asked Marina, now beginning to be interested in the affair.

"I cannot tell you, I'm sure," Esther answered, "for I could not see his face plainly, nor much of his body. Only

his eyes could I distinguish, but even in those I thought I could read a peculiar earnestness."

"Say you he is there now?"

"Yes, somewhere, for he could not have gone without my seeing him. I have thought once or twice that I saw his eyes peering through the spaces between the leaves, but 'twas only glistening drops of dew. But watch—we shall see him again."

Marina was now fairly awake to earnest curiosity, and anxiously she stood and watched the myrtle trees. At every movement of a leaf she thought she saw a man and every bird that fluttered in the surrounding foliage was sure to draw her startled attention. Ten minutes had they watched in silence, when some of the leaves were seen to move, but instead of dropping back as though jostled by the passing breeze, they remained fixed.

"There! Now I can see two eyes," whispered Esther.

"I see them," returned Marina, "and they are glancing upon me."

"See—there's part of the face."

"Yes," tremblingly responded Marina, without changing her position.

The leaves fell back, and Marina drew a long breath.

"Who can it be?" she uttered, when satisfied that those two peering eyes had disappeared from sight.

"I cannot guess," returned Esther.

"It may be some evil eye," continued Marina, with a shudder.

"Ay, and it may be some good genius," added Esther, with a smile.

"I hope so."

And so they both hoped.

Ere long the man was seen to move away. His step was slow, as could be seen by the opaque shadow made along behind the shrubbery. The girls watched in vain for the moment when he should be revealed, but they yet had the satisfaction of knowing that he was gone. The way he took was along the shrub-bordered walk that led to the river, and when he reached the first angle beyond the flower garden, he entirely disappeared. Once or twice Marina thought he turned his head towards their closet as she saw his red and yellow cap moving along above the tops of the bushes, but if she did she saw nothing of his face.

When satisfied that they should see no more for the present of their undefinable watcher, the girls returned to the inner apartment, and before they could discuss much





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upon the events that had passed, the door was thrown open, and two female servants entered, bearing between them a large silver tray upon which was the morning's meal, consisting of the finest cake, a flagon of light wine, a dish of coffee, and several of the lighter kinds of fruits. The menialt spoke not a word, but having set down their burdens they as once retired.

Both the girls partook freely of the viands thus set before them, and Marina was even surprised at the command she had gained over her feelings when she found herself coolly discussing with her companion the merits of the cakes and fruit. Had she been told when she stood upon the captive's stand in the bazaar of Tarsus that she could have felt thus—that she could have experienced the firmness of hope that now nerved her—she would have treated the idea as a taunt against her soul's purest feeling.

Half an hour passed, and then the servants returned and took the tray away. They were as silent as before, and moved like curious pieces of mechanism. One of them cast a sidelong glance towards the pretty face of Esther, but upon Marina they seemed not to dare a look, rather showing by their manners that she was a sacred thing.

When the girls were once more left alone they began to converse upon the subject of their unfortunate capture, and Marina grew sad and gloomy. Esther tried to revive her spirits, but it was of no avail.

“Come,” said the latter, as she moved her seat nearer to her companion, and laid her head upon her shoulder, “I will tell you a pretty story. It is one my father told me.”

Marina looked up, and though she spoke not, yet the quick flash of gratitude that passed over her face told that she would like to hear the story. Esther was on the point of commencing when the door was again opened, and a female entered and informed them that Ben-Saul was about to visit them.

“Now remember, be firm,” urged Esther, in an imploring tone.

“Fear not,” returned Marina, as she strove to quiet the trembling the announcement had caused. “I can meet him calmly.”

In a few moments more the merchant entered. There was a smile upon his face, and he looked gratified as Marina calmly and dignifiedly arose to receive him. He asked her to be seated, and then he sat down by her side, and took up her hand and kissed it.

“How feel you this morning, sweet one?” he asked.

The words, the tone, grated harshly upon Marina's ears, but nevertheless she called a kind look to her face, and answered:—

“I am much better, sir.”

Innocent deception was now easier, for she had bent herself to the task, and she felt sure she could carry it through, so she continued, while she gazed frankly into her master's face.

“I felt sad and heart-sick yesterday, for I never before ever dreamed of such misery as I endured while exposed to the gaze of that unfeeling crowd, who collected about the stand upon which I was placed. 'Twas hard, too, to think I was a captive, but now I feel revived. The beauties of this place, the sweet fragrance of the air, and the thousand lovely scenes that spread themselves about, all tend to make me feel happier; but, sir, what, more than all else, reconciles me to my lot, is the kindness of heart that I see dwelling in your face. I know that you will respect one of gentle blood, and make smooth the path she is to tread.”

“Delightful creature!” cried Ben-Saul, his eyes sparkling with unexpected pleasure. “Everything shall be yours. Long have I sought one like you. I have wives, but none whom I love as the mother of my children. For two long years have I been every week in attendance at the market of Tarsus, but no female have I seen, till I saw you, who could approach my wish. You, fair Marina, have far exceeded it.”

Marina listened patiently to all this, and she even looked thankful for her master's preference. Then Ben-Saul asked her numerous questions concerning her nativity, her habits, and the circumstances attending her capture. To some of them she answered truly, while to others she gave prevaricatory replies. At the end of over half an hour the merchant had expressed himself most perfectly delighted with Marina's wit and good sense, and had also assured her that she should have a whole week in which to rest and make herself contented in her new home. Then he claimed the privilege of kissing her upon the brow, after which he retired.

“Oh,” murmured Marina, as Ben-Saul's footsteps died away in the distance, “I cannot pass through another such ordeal, indeed I cannot. It is all deception, it is base falsehood from my heart. If he persists in visiting me, I must show him how I loathe the advances he makes.”

“One week,” urged Esther, “and then”——

“Then what?” uttered Marina.



“Escape,” said Esther, with an encouraging smile.

“Oh, if I could think it.”

“Hope it!”

“And at the end of a week I shall be the ”——

A cold shudder crept through the poor girl’s frame at the thought thus called up, and while she hesitated, Esther laid her arm around her neck, and whispered:—

“Free!”

What a strange thing had become the soul of the fair Marina. As she felt the warm pressure of a friend, and heard that simple word, she must have felt sweet hope once more, for she looked up and smiled.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE MYSTERIOUS WATCHER AGAIN.

AFTER dinner had been served to the girls in their own apartment, they were waited upon by a female servant, aged, but yet firm and hearty in appearance, who asked them if they would like to walk in the gardens. Of course they joyfully accepted the proposal, and at once accompanied their conductor. They strolled through the arbors and graperies, walked around the fountains and admired the many colored fish, stopped and plucked such fruit and flowers as they wished, and listened with interest to the information of their guide, with respect to the different things they saw.

Several times during the walk had both Marina and Esther fancied they heard the pattering of cautious feet behind them, and as often had they turned, but they had seen nothing. They had arrived at a point where the way separated into two paths, one leading off towards a small artificial lake to the eastward, and the other leading directly back to the palace. For some distance the smoothly paved paths ran very nearly together, but no view could be obtained

from one to the other, as the borders of both were flanked with a sort of hedge formed of stunted lemon trees. Towards the lake the guide led the way, and shortly after they had entered the path the footsteps were heard to the left, and ere long they seemed to be only a few feet distant. They were hardly perceptible, and evidently the invisible pedestrian was aiming to conceal entirely the sound of his feet. The old woman noticed it not, but the girls were keenly alive to the dropping even of a leaf, and this steady, cautious tread could not escape them. They tried hard to peer through the intricacies of the hedge, but the compact foliage resisted the extension of their vision, and they gazed inquisitively and wonderingly, each upon the other.

Both seemed to understand the silent language, for gradually they allowed their conductor to gain distance. The footfalls were still to be heard at short intervals, seeming anon to start on ahead, and then for a time to remain silent.

"Marina," said Esther, in a tone so low that it could not reach the ears of the old woman, "that is our morning's watcher."

"So I am confident," returned Marina, with a calmness which, though blended with anxious curiosity, was yet free from fear. "It must be the same, or else some one who is equally anxious to watch us."

"See that spot ahead where there seems to be a break in the hedge?"

Marina nodded assent, and Esther continued:—

"The steps seem to have stopped there. Let us walk on as if to overtake our guide, and when directly opposite we will suddenly turn our heads and look."

The answer to this proposition was a silent affirmative, and with eager steps the girls hurried on. The spot to which Esther had alluded was where one of the lemons grew slightly apart from its companions, and as they came opposite to it they both cast their eyes towards it, and on the instant they saw the same sharp eyes that had peered upon them from the myrtle grove; or at least, they saw plainly a pair of eyes, and the same parti-colored cap. The features were not visible, but yet they knew 'twas a man who watched their course. The invisible started back as his own eye-beams were reflected back from the orbs that were bent towards him, and in a moment more his steps were heard striking off towards the other path, and ere long they were entirely lost.

"That was not an evil eye," said Esther, when she had become assured that their mysterious watcher had gone.



"No," returned Marina, with a sort of blushing hope laying its bloom upon her fair countenance. "Those eyes were not surely evil. They had none of the cat-like, snakish gleam, but they looked large and warm."

"Like the eyes of a watching friend," added Esther.

"Yes, like a friend. The gods grant it."

"Perhaps," said Esther, "some one may have followed us from Tyre, for the vessel that took us might have been seen from the harbor."

Suddenly Marina trembled and turned pale, and she fairly grasped her companion's arm for support.

"What is the matter, dear Marina?"

"It may be some one from Tyre," uttered the startled girl. "The king may have tracked us."

"Then let his messenger take us," said Esther, in a tone of strange firmness.

"Oh, that would be as horrible as this."

"No, Marina."

"What—not to wed that wicked prince?"

"You shall not wed him."

"If I am in his power what can save me?"

"A power mightier than Mapen's."

"Ah, Esther, there is none mightier in Tyre."

"There is!"

"Whose?"

"There are two. One is a noble power; the other full as noble, but more dreadful in that it is revengeful."

"But I cannot comprehend," uttered Marina, gazing into her companion's face with utter astonishment.

"Neither can I explain it all," returned Esther; "but I can give you the assurance that the king cannot harm thee. Of the powers that will oppose him, I can only say, one is such as every wicked ruler may fear—the vengeance of a wronged and oppressed people, whose very blood must flow at the nod of royal vice. The other is a power more mighty still, but upon which my lips are sealed."

"Is it from the gods?" asked Marina, in a subdued tone, while her eyes seemed open to catch the answer.

A strange light, seeming a half melancholy smile, overspread Esther's features, and for a moment she gazed earnestly, affectionately into her companion's face. Then she laid her hand upon Marina's shoulder, and while a glistening tear started out upon her silken lashes, she replied:—

"It is more tangible than that. Gio, the armorer of Tyre, will hold you above the reach of the king, if he has need."

"That strange man?" murmured Marina.

"Yes, and he can save you when all else may fail," exclaimed Esther.

"Who is he? What is he that he has such power over the Tyrian monarch?"

"I have told thee all," returned Esther. "Gio will save thee if once you land in Tyre. Ask no more of him."

"But you spoke of the people. How mean you there? The people have no power in Tyre."

"Ah, Marina, you know not what power years of wrong may stir up in the bosoms of those whom we look upon as loyal subjects of a crown."

"But the king is all-powerful."

"Nay," said Esther, in a meaning tone. "He may find it not so. Wrong and tyranny can never be all-powerful."

The guide had reached the lake, and turned to wait for the girls, so they had no further chance to carry on their conversation. The fish were beautiful, the water was clear and cool, and the girls appeared to the old woman to be delighted with the scene, and ere long they started on their return to the palace.

The evening's meal had been eaten, the lamps lighted, and Marina and Esther were alone in the gorgeous apartment that had been assigned to them. Both seemed more contented than before, for the former looked calm and peaceful, and the latter was more happy from that simple fact.

"This morning," said Marina, as both she and her companion reclined upon the soft Persian couch that stood near the closet of the balcony, "you promised to tell me a story, just as we were interrupted with breakfast. Suppose you tell it to me now?"

"With pleasure," returned Esther. "It is a simple story, but it will serve to beguile a few of our tedious moments."

And thus speaking, she went on to relate the story of "The Magic Flower."

"Once there lived near the margin of a small lake a poor fisherman, who used to derive all his sustenance from the bosom of the bright waters that sparkled before his cot. His name was Famedo. He had one daughter, and she was so beautiful that the fisherman was almost afraid to have her run out of doors lest some envious fairy should carry her off; and when Famedo came to name his child, he was at a loss what name to give her. She was so beautifully bright that he at first thought he would call her Sunlight; but then he thought that sometimes people shrank away from the light hot sun, and his mind dwelt upon the moon; but the moon was always changing, and sometimes it was so stingy



of its light that it did not show hardly any of its face. So the poor man sat and looked at his child and wondered what he should call her. The sun went down, and the dim shadows began to fall over the earth, but the moon did not rise, and what is more, he knew it would not show itself during the whole long night. The fisherman sat at the door of his cot, and while he puzzled his brain upon the subject of his thoughts, his eyes rested upon the bosom of the lake, and suddenly he thought he saw a diamond sparkling within the clear waters. At first he was startled, but soon he saw that what he had taken for so rich a jewel was nothing but a reflection, for on looking up into the heavens he saw a most brilliant star looking down upon the lake. The star he knew was always there, and from that moment he loved it, and he called his little daughter Starbeam.

“As Starbeam grew older, she grew more and more beautiful, and the goodness of her heart was equal to her beauty, for she never could bear to see even a fly harmed, nor could she look upon suffering without trying to wipe it away. A neighboring prince, who had just ascended to the throne, often saw her as he rode by when out hunting, and he loved her, so that he made Famedo promise that he should have her for his wife when she was a little older. He often stopped and talked with her, and the more he saw of her the more he loved her, and Starbeam began to love him as well.

“One day when Starbeam was wandering along by the edge of the lake, she saw a flower that grew upon the bank. It was one she had seen a thousand times, and as often had she stopped and admired its beauty and its fragrance; but she had never plucked it, because she loved to see it blooming there, and she knew that when once it was taken from its stem it would fade away and die. But now Starbeam felt sad, for the pretty flower had begun to droop, and its leaves were shutting themselves up as though the cruel hand of death had touched it with his cold wand. Perhaps, thought she, the ground has become dry and hard; so she took a stick and loosened the earth about the roots of the poor flower, and then she went to the lake and brought water in her tiny white hands, which she dropped around it. After she had done this, she placed her fingers carefully upon the stalk; but no sooner had she touched it than the flower began to rise up of itself, and the red and white leaves began to spread out as before; but instead of stopping when they had reached their former position, they continued to spread and grow, and soon the flower opened so wide that a lovely fairy arose from its bosom and stepped

down by the side of Starbeam, after which the flower resumed its natural shape.

“Starbeam was not at all frightened, for the fairy looked so kind and smiled so sweetly that she at once felt at home in her presence.

“‘You may wonder,’ said the fairy, as she kissed Starbeam upon the lips, ‘to see me here, and still more to know that I came out of that flower; but I will tell you all about it in a very few words. A wicked old fairy had a daughter whom she thought to be the most beautiful being on earth; but one day, when she was praising her child in the presence of several other fairies, one of them told her that she knew of a being far handsomer than her daughter, and at the same time she was imprudent enough to mention me as the one to whom she alluded. This made the proud mother envious, and she determined to be revenged, and to that end she sought me out. She found me more beautiful than her own daughter, and in her heart she swore that I must not live to rival a child of hers, so she stamped upon the ground, and then spitting upon me she changed me into a flower, and said that I should live in that form during the allotted age of mortals, unless some one picked me from my stem, in which case I should die. The rest of my sentence was full as wicked, for when I had lived the period of mortal life, I was to droop and die unless some kind hand should support me, and endeavor to bring back vigor to my frame. Who would ever have thought a child of earth would take such trouble for a poor flower? Not I, surely. But you, sweet Starbeam, have saved me not only from death, but you have released me from the wicked fairy’s power. Long years have passed away since I was confined to this spot, and the only real joy I have experienced during that time has been when you have flitted about me and loved me. Oh, how often have I gazed upon your kind face and wondered if you were not good enough to save me; and many times, as you have stooped over to inhale my fragrance, have I kissed you, though you knew it not.’

“As the lovely fairy thus spoke, she turned and plucked the flower from its stem, and then handing it to Starbeam, she said:—

“‘Here, take this flower and wear it in your bosom; and though I may never appear in person to you again, yet if danger ever threatens you, I will animate this blossom with my own spirit and protect you. Keep it safely, now, and cherish it against the hour of need.’ Starbeam looked up to thank the fairy after she had placed the flower in her



bosom, but she was gone. The beautiful girl looked in all directions, but she soon knew that she was all alone, and then she would have felt sad, but the sweet fragrance of the flower at that moment rose gratefully to her senses, and with a bright smile she turned her steps towards her humble home.

“A long year passed away, and yet the flower was as fresh as when it had been first plucked. Often had it saved Starbeam from trouble and perplexity, and it had brought plenty to the fisherman’s cot. It seemed to grow more fragrant and beautiful the longer Starbeam wore it in her bosom, and she, too, became more lovely and good.

“Now opposite to the fisherman’s cot, upon the other side of the lake, arose a high, black mountain, and in some of its caves lived a wicked genie. This genie had seen Starbeam, and so charmed had he become by her beauty, that he determined to possess her; so one dark night he stole her away from her home and flew with her to the mountain, where he confined her in a deep, cold cavern. The next day—Starbeam knew it was day, because so long a time had passed since she had been shut up there—the genie entered the cavern with a huge torch in his hand, and boldly asked her to become his wife. The very sight of the hideous monster made her cry with terror, and covering her face with her hands, she only wept in answer to his detestable persuasions. Several times the genie attempted to seize her in his rage, but some power held him back, and at length he turned to go away, but ere he went he swore by the most terrible oaths, that the next time he came she should either become his wife, or else he would surely kill her.

“The ponderous door was fastened once more upon her, and in the darkness she sat down upon the cold hard stone and wept. Long hours passed away, and though she felt not hunger, yet she wondered not at it, for in her misery she forgot that she was ever hungry. Again and again the wicked genie came, but he gained nothing in his suit, and then he swore that he would keep Starbeam there in the cold darkness till she acceded to his wishes. A month had now rolled away, and yet Starbeam had never once thought of the magic flower; but when her terrible master threatened to keep her there forever, she sank down in utter despair and asked to die. At that moment she felt a warm glow in her bosom, and something whispered, ‘Hope!’ Then she remembered her flower, and quickly she drew it forth. It was of a dazzling brightness, and a thousand rays of light shot out from it and illumined the cavern like the meridian of

day. Brighter and brighter grew the flower, until it seemed as though all the light of the heavens was confined in that one spot, and yet Starbeam's eyes were able to bear it.

"At this moment the great door was opened, and the genie entered; but the intense light so dazzled his eyes that he had to shut them for fear of being blinded, and then Starbeam saw her advantage. The door was open, and quickly she darted through it; the leaves of the flower were instantly changed into a hundred bright wings, and they bore her aloft into the air. The genie saw his mishap, and he gave such a roar that the rocks tumbled down about the entrance to his cavern in such huge masses that he was forever in the bowels of the black mountain, and ever to this day, when he roars in his dark prison, the good people who live about there think that it is the rolling thunder.

"When Starbeam reached her own home she found the young king there in the greatest misery at her absence, but he was all joy when he once more clasped her to his bosom, and he made her go to his palace and become his queen at once. Her old father went, too, and spent the rest of his days at the rich court of his daughter's husband. Time flew on, and yet Starbeam cherished her flower. At length, heaven blessed her with a son, and it was so beautiful that the king could hardly leave it for a moment. One day the happy mother held her infant to her bosom, and she took out the flower to compare its colors with the glow of beauty that dwelt upon the features of her son. One was as white as the other, and so, too, did each partake equally of the rich crimson. Starbeam was happy, and she laid the flower upon the table. Soon there came a voice from it, and it said, 'Be ever virtuous, ever kind, ever just, and you will need nothing more to make you happy.' Then the leaves of the flower began to wither and die—they rolled and crackled, and ere long they lay upon the table a heap of shapeless dust. Then a breath of air swept through the room and whirled them out at the window, where they were lost to human sight forever; but Starbeam was not sad. She looked upon her child—it smiled—and she was happier than ever."



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE STRANGE VISITOR AND HIS PURPOSE.

MARINA thanked Esther for her story, and she wished that she could but possess that magic flower.

“You do possess its magical principles of happiness,” said Esther; “and if you properly exercise them you never can be utterly miserable.”

Marina gazed with surprise into her companion's face, for she began to feel that the armorer's daughter was after all the true mistress. She had betrayed a strength of mind, a steadiness of purpose and a keenness of perception which she herself could not have exercised, and then, too, she had evinced a knowledge and a well of thought and feeling, that marked her as one who bore no ordinary stamp of humanity.

It had grown to be very dark without, and night was creeping on apace with its star-gemmed canopy of bluish-black. Perhaps the deep foliage that waved over the earth made it look darker than it really was; but at all events, it was so dark that one would have found little difficulty in hiding from even very close pursuers. The girls had leaned back upon their couch, and were half buried in dreamy forgetfulness, when they were both startled by a low clattering near the window of the closet that overlooked the garden.

Instantly they started up, and without speaking they breathlessly hearkened to see if the sound would be repeated. It was repeated, and with tremulous fear Marina caught her companion by the arm, and exclaimed:—

“’Tis some one entering our apartment!”

“Perhaps not,” returned Esther, who was herself slightly alarmed. “It may be”——

She did not finish her sentence, for at that moment the sound was repeated with increased violence, and shrinking back nearer to the door that led out into the inner corridor, they stood in trembling anxiety. They had left the door of the closet open, so as to admit the fresh air, and they could plainly see the whole of the window beyond. Not long had they stood thus when Marina was confident she saw a dark object intrude itself between the open space of the window

and the foliage beyond; and grasping Esther more firmly by the arm, she uttered:—

“Come, let us flee from here.”

“No, no,” quickly returned Esther. “If it is one who intends to visit us, let him come; and then if he meditates harm we can easily arouse sufficient help, for there are slaves near at hand in the adjoining apartments. If he, or whoever it be, seeks to carry us back to Tyre, we will go. Remember the assurance I have given thee.”

Marina remained more calmly in her place, and gradually the dark figure rose above the coping and stood revealed in the window. There were lights burning in the apartment, but the stranger was shrouded in a large mantle, and nothing of his face could be seen. He took a step into the closet, and then stopping, he threw the mantle slightly off his head and placed his fingers to his lips.

“’Sh!” issued from his tongue. “Is the daughter of Kison Ludim here?”

Marina trembled more violently than before, but Esther quickly answered:—

“She is.”

“Then step this way—farther from the walls that join the other apartment,” whispered the unknown.

“But who are you?”

“One who would befriend you.”

“How?”

“With liberty.”

“And to whom would you deliver us?” asked Marina.

The unknown hesitated a moment, and the girls thought he trembled with emotion.

“I said you should have liberty,” he at length returned.

“Will not that satisfy you, Marina?”

The fair girl started forward a step and stopped. That voice thrilled to her soul, and she thought she knew its tones.

“Who are you? speak!” she uttered, leaning forward.

The unknown threw his eyes about him with a quick, searching glance, and then he let the mantle fall from his shoulders. The soft light of the golden lamps fell upon the aged features of Kison Ludim! With a stifled cry Marina darted forward and found a warm home within her father’s embrace.

“Not dead, not dead!” she murmured, as she gazed up into the tear-wet face of her parent.

“No, no, my child, but a captive like yourself,” returned he, as he pressed his daughter once more to his bosom.

“Oh, I thought you were drowned.”



“Ha, and did the king so give it out?”

“Yes; he said you accidentally fell overboard.”

“Oh, the villain!”

“But how is it, father? What is this? Did the king dare to sell you into slavery?”

“No, my child,” returned the old man, while his features were harrowed by a painful look, “he sold me to my death. After I had refused him your hand for the prince, he engaged me in the pretended embassy to Sidon, but he had in reality given orders for me to be thrown overboard as soon as we were out of sight of land. The captain of the vessel would have surely done the fatal deed, but he chanced to fall in with a Cyprian corsair, and in the height of his cupidity he sold me for a hundred ounces of silver. I was exposed in the market at Tarsus, and Ben-Saul bought me for an under superintendent. I have not told my rank, nor does he know from whence I came. I saw you when you were brought hither, and though your veil was down, yet I felt sure that ’twas you. This morning I watched you from the myrtles, and this afternoon I followed you through the garden. I saw you plainly, and I even felt a thrill of joy, for I knew that you were not in the clutches of Mapen. I did not dare that you should see me, for fear that the surprise would cause you to expose me.”

“And shall we escape from here, father?”

“Yes, or die; but we have not much to fear, for I have possessed myself of a key that will let us out to the river, and once there we can easily obtain a barge. You shall tell me anon of the strange circumstances which brought you here; but now we must be on the move, for time is precious. But your companion here”——

“She is the daughter of Gio.”

“The armorer?”

“Yes, and to her we both owe much.”

“And she shall be rewarded; but come—I will hear the story at another time.”

Ludim grasped Esther warmly by the hand as he spoke, and then he turned towards the window. Here he gazed carefully around, and having become satisfied that no one was stirring, he beckoned for the girls to step forward. He had brought ropes with him, with which to facilitate the descent, and having prepared a sort of noose, he asked Marina if she dared trust herself to be lowered by it.

“Anything—everything I dare,” she quickly replied.

Ludim passed the noose over her head, and then adjusted it under her arms, and making sure that the knot was safe,

and that the rope would give no pain, he requested her to sit down upon the coping. She unhesitatingly obeyed, and then she gradually eased herself from her seat, until she hung by the rope, and thus she was safely landed upon the ground below. Esther followed her companion's example, and then securing the rope to a brazen bolt in the casing, Ludim followed them.

Already the girls felt like freed birds, but they knew there was much yet to be passed ere they could be free, for a long way lay between them and the goal of their hopes. For several moments the small party remained where they landed, listening to see if the breeze bore upon its bosom the sound of danger. But all was quiet, and at length the old man whispered for Marina and Esther to follow him.

"Be cautious, now," he said, "and let not even your robes drag upon the pavement, lest they should start a rolling pebble. Stoop below the shrubbery, and keep your ears and eyes open; come."

Stealthily they crept along the marble walk that led to the river, stopping occasionally to listen, and then again pushing slowly, cautiously on. Half the way had they gained, and perhaps more, when Esther, who was behind, suddenly uttered an exclamation of alarm.

"What is the matter?" breathlessly asked Ludim, as he bent lower and turned back.

"Hark!" returned Esther, straining her ears towards the palace; "I heard loud voices, and they sounded as though they were responding to an alarm."

"Oh, heavens, we are detected!" cried Marina, upon whose ears the sound now fell.

Ludim tremblingly arose to his feet and gazed towards the palace. The confusion was plainly to be heard, and he did not fail to distinguish the voice of Ben-Saul among the rest.

"I fear they have indeed discovered our flight," murmured the old man.

"They have!" cried Esther; "for see—there are moving lights and persons hurrying to and fro in the chamber we have left."

"Then let us fly to the river," cried Marina, springing towards her father and grasping him by the arm; "fly to the barge and put off at once."

"That would be madness, child," returned the old man, still straining his eyes towards the palace; "we should be taken at once if we trusted to the river now."

"They are coming this way!" exclaimed Esther; "we must flee somewhere. The deep foliage will hide us."



A moment Ludim listened, and his lips quivered as he heard the sound of hastening footsteps on the pavement of the same walk in which he stood, and in another instant the gleam of the torch-light shot through the open spaces between the intervening boughs.

"Come, come!" cried the old man, in a hoarse whisper, "follow me quickly. Here, Marina, give me your hand, and you, Esther, take hers. There is an opening ahead, a sort of by-path, that leads entirely out of the garden through a wicket that is never closed. Come."

As Ludim spoke, he grasped his child by the hand and hurried on. The pursuers were now frightfully near, but the curving of the path yet protected them from sight. At a short distance the old man came to a narrow, graveled walk, turning off to the left, and entering this, he pushed on with all the speed he could command. Fear, the hopes of liberty, and the picture of home, lent wings to their feet and swiftly they glided along the narrow way. At length they reached the garden wall. The wicket gate was open, and they passed through, but hardly had they gained the opposite side, when the footfall of a pursuer was heard, and in a moment the flashing of a torch broke along the path.

"We must hide," exclaimed Ludim, as he saw at a glance that to run further would be useless. "Here—within these bushes; in—quick!"

The old man sprang in among the shrubbery and pulled Marina after him, while Esther sought a hiding place a few feet further on. They had hardly become nestled in their places, when the torch-bearer came running up. He was a stout fellow, and Ludim instantly recognized him as one of Ben-Saul's boatmen, a brutal man, who took no greater pleasure than in whipping and beating those who might be placed under his charge. He was alone, and as the old man could hear no one following, he at once judged that only a single messenger had been sent in this direction. The fellow came up to where lay Ludim and passed, but in an instant more he stopped. His torch had flashed upon the crimson mantle of Esther!

"Aha! so you're here, are you?" he exultingly exclaimed, as he sprang forward and pushed aside the foliage. "Come forth and show yourself."

As the pursuer thus spoke, he grasped the poor girl by the arm and ruthlessly dragged her out into the path.

"Where is your mistress?" he asked, as he held the torch up to her face, and discovered which of the girls he had found.

"I don't know. Let me go!" shrieked Esther.

"You do know. Oh, you needn't struggle in that fashion; you can't escape me. Now tell me, where is your mistress?"

The poor girl uttered a low cry of pain as the unfeeling man's gripe fastened itself more tightly around her quivering arm, but she gave him no answer.

Ludim laid his hand upon the hilt of a dagger he wore within his bosom, and drew it forth. All depended now upon his coolness and fortitude, and he knew that a single moment thrown away might form the link that should bind him in the chains to helpless misery. The messenger's back was turned towards him—he was struggling with Esther, and the torch, which had fallen to the ground, cast a fitful glare over the scene.

The old man grasped the dagger more firmly in his hold, and he noiselessly, but quickly, crept out into the path. A single moment his eye searched for the spot where a blow would do its fell work, and then he sprang upon the brutal boatman. The bright blade reflected back one gleam of the torch-light, and then, ere the ruffian could see who it was that touched him, its hilt rested upon his breast—the blade had sank deeper in and found his heart!

A low groan broke the air—then a stifled cry—and the boatman reeled against the shrubbery. Ludim let go his hold, and the corpse fell within the very place where Esther had hid herself.

The old man stopped not to look upon his work, but thrusting the dagger into its sheath, he stooped down and grasped the torch, and then listening an instant to see that none others followed him, he dashed out the flame and cast the smoking stump away.

"Come, come," he cried. "Let us on once more. There are barges ahead."

The way seemed darker than ever, but with renewed hope the trio pushed on, and ere long the waters of the Cydnus were in sight.



## CHAPTER XX.

## THE BARGE AT SEA.

KISON LUDIM led the way down to the edge of the river, and with quick steps the party of fugitives hastened along in the path which the fishermen had trodden upon the bank. It was now nearly daylight, the atmosphere was cool, and a somewhat fresh breeze came sweeping down the river. At the distance of nearly two miles from the gardens of Ben-Saul, they came to the grounds of another dwelling, which stood back from the river. Here they found boats, and bidding the two girls to remain behind, the old man crept cautiously forward towards the landing steps, to see if the place were watched. No sound, however, met his ear, nor could he detect anything of the guardsmen. He reached the boats, and after a few moments' search he found a barge that suited his purpose, the chain of which was only hooked into a staple upon the shore.

Having satisfied himself upon these points, Ludim hastened back and bade the girls follow him, and ere long the three were seated in the barge. The chain was cast loose, the bows shoved off, and beneath the influence of the wind and a gentle current, the craft was swept slowly down the river. When a point had been gained where they were clear of the chance of detection, Ludim loosened the sail, and soon the barge was gliding rapidly onward.

Marina now related to her father all that had transpired since his disappearance, and as she closed her narrative he sank into a fit of deep musing, which for some minutes was only disturbed by the attention that was necessary for the guidance of the barge. Part of the time his eyes rested upon Marina, and anon they dwelt upon undefined space.

"You say Gio has sworn to protect you from the king?" he said at length, with a peculiar earnestness in his manner.

"Yes, he has, my lord," interrupted Esther; "and he will do it, too."

"How know you that?" asked Ludim.

"Because he has said so, and he is able to do it," quickly returned Esther.

"He is your father, I think you said?"

"Yes, sir."

"And yet I knew not that Gio had a child when he was in the service of Strato," pursued the old man, in a half thoughtful, half searching manner.

Esther turned away her head and looked into the dark water. Night would have hidden the color that came to her cheek, and covered the tremulousness that played with her features, for she was some distance from her interlocutor; but she turned away her face, nevertheless. When she spoke, however, her voice was calm.

"No wonder, my lord, for when my father let himself to the elder Strato, he chose not to let his own child, too. I came to him only after he took a house of his own."

"And where lived you during the long years of your father's bondage?" continued the old man, more in a mood of curiosity than of design.

"On the main land, sir."

Ludim seemed not to notice the equivocal turn of the reply he had received, and again he sank into a reverie.

"Look out, my lord," uttered Esther.

The man raised his head and found that the barge was hauling in upon the shore. With an exclamation about his own neglect he put off again, and then turning to Esther, he remarked:—

"Your father does not wear the features of a Tyrian."

The girl made no reply, and after a moment's pause, Ludim continued:—

"Was he born in Tyre?"

"I think not, my lord."

"What country was it, then, that gave him birth?"

"There are other cities in Phœnicia besides Tyre, and of the same country."

"Ah, then he is a Phœnician?"

"I was very young, my lord, when Gio came to Tyre."

Ludim started, for he saw that the girl was evading his question. He regarded her a short time in silence, and then he mused again. Could he have distinctly seen Esther's face he would have surely been puzzled by the expression that rested there. It was not one of reverie, nor yet of reflection of any kind, but it was a strange sparkling of the eyes, and a curious playing of the muscles of the face.

"You said the high priest of Hercules aided the armorer in your concealment?" at length resumed he. "Did they seem to be on terms of understanding with each other?"

"Perfectly."



“Do you understand the nature of the intimacy between Balbec and your father?” asked the old man of Esther.

“Such a question as that, my lord, you well know I cannot answer, for the priests are set apart from men of the world, and if by chance my ear hath drank in things the world knows not of, I am not at liberty to give them to others.”

“There is no use in questioning her further,” said Marina, laying her hand upon her father’s arm; “for I have asked her the same questions in vain. She has been kind, very kind, to me, and let us thank her, rather than fret her with questions she does not wish to answer.”

“You are right, my child,” returned Ludim, in a freer tone; and though from that time he alluded not to the subject again, yet the matter therein hidden seemed to bear heavily on his mind, for he showed it in all his movements.

The barge now approached the city of Tarsus, and soon the fugitives were sailing past the place where they had been exposed for public sale. Ludim forgot his subject of meditation for the time, and turned his attention to guiding his craft clear of danger. One or two boats were moving about in shore, and a vessel was coming up from the sea. The old man carefully watched everything about him, and though the fear of being overhauled by some busy-body gave him some concern, yet the wind was fresh, and he was fast passing away from the scene of his danger. The captain of the entering vessel hailed him in Arabic, and merely returning a commonplace salutation, he sped on.

At length the barge bade a murmuring farewell to the cool waters of the Cydnus, and put forth her head into the Mediterranean. A short time she sped on, borne along by the breeze, and then Ludim found that he had miscalculated in a very important particular. The breeze that had treated his frail bark so kindly while shielded by the banks of the river, became quite another thing now that he had got some miles out to sea. The girls began to feel sick, and the novice commander was not a little uneasy. He had thought it would be easy to run down somewhere on the coast of Phœnicia, and there land and proceed on foot to a seaport where a passage to Tyre could be obtained; but such a chance began now to look dubious.

In his intense desire to escape from captivity he had had his mind only upon two points—the chains he was leaving behind, and the coast he was to gain; he had thought not of how he was to reach there. Seriously Ludim meditated upon turning the barge’s head about and running back into the river; but there was one difficulty in the way—he could not

do it. He understood how to run her before the wind, but he had little idea of the *modus operandi* to be observed in getting along against the wind, especially in such a sea-way.

It was so dark that the coast was now entirely lost to view, and once Ludim attempted to put the barge upon a more southerly course, for in that direction he knew the land must lay; but the experiment came near proving fatal to him for as the craft came broadside to the wind she liked to have gone over. As a last resort he lowered his sail, determined not to be driven further out to sea than possible, and then stationed himself once more at the helm, bent only upon keeping the barge from getting cradled in the trough of the sea.

The girls were now fairly sick, though the peril that stared them in the face kept them from sinking beneath it. The light river-barge tossed and heaved upon the waves, and minus even her sail, she was taking a deal of wind upon her high, clumsy stern, and driving fast out to sea.

After long, tedious hours had passed away, the morning came, and as its first gray streaks lit up the horizon, Ludim strained his eyes about him on all hands in search for land, but nought save one vast, watery expanse, capped by its blue arch, met his gaze. The sea was running high, lifting and sinking the light barge upon its crests and in its billows—rocking and tossing it about like a feather upon a ruffled pool, and the old man began to think of resigning himself to death. From the perils that now beset him he knew of no escape. A power mightier than that of earth now held him, and in its hand he was as clay beneath the touch of the potter. As it grew lighter, he stood up and gazed more intensely about, but the same interminable blue reached to the horizon all around. The girls had sunk beneath the power of sickness and fatigue, but now they opened their eyes and started up. Marina uttered a sharp cry of anguish as she read the tale that was so fearfully written upon her father's countenance, and crawling up to a seat by his side, she gazed earnestly upon him, while Esther, with a quickly beating heart, strained her sharp eyes away over the heaving sea.

"Father, we are lost!" murmured Marina, in a tone that seemed to beg for a ray of hope.

"Lost!" iterated the old man, with painful hesitancy. "Alas, that I should be so thoughtless! Lost! And thou, too, my child! O God, have mercy on us!"

Marina's noble heart threw off its whole load of fear as she realized her father's agony, and she tried to soothe him.



"Oh, my child," he returned, while he raised his trembling hand and swept it with a slow motion about towards the horizon, "look at the wide grave that yawns for us! I will not, I cannot express a hope I do not feel. Every wave that breaks upon us lends some of its bulk to weigh us down nearer to that grave. Let us be prepared for the worst. See, the sun has risen, and its beams are lighting up our cold resting-place. We shall never see it again!"

As the old man spoke, a wave broke over the barge, drenching its inmates to the skin. Marina hid her face in her father's bosom, while he, with a nervous grip, still held his craft before the wind. Esther had raised herself upon a high, trunk-like cuddy that was arranged around the mast, and in silence she was still sweeping the dim horizon with her straining eyes. Kison Ludim gazed upon her in wonder, for so dauntless, so majestic even, looked she as she stood there that he almost for the moment forgot the dangers that circled about him.

At length the fair watcher raised herself upon tip-toe, grasped the mast more firmly, and strained her neck to its utmost. Her eyes were fixed upon a point on the western horizon, where she had caught a speck of glistening whiteness, that looked like a swimming sea-bird. More and more earnestly she gazed, and ere long she uttered a low cry of joy, for as the barge raised upon the bosom of a swelling sea, she knew that she looked upon a sail!

As she sank upon the seat by the side of Marina, Ludim sprang to his feet. The sail could now be distinctly seen as the sun played upon its white surface, and with a new life coursing through his veins the old man hastened to raise a signal of distress. He cast off the red mantle from his shoulders, and having secured it to the halyards which were used for the owner's pennant, he run it up. The breeze caught its crimson folds and spread them flauntingly upon its bosom. Nearly an hour of painful anxiety passed away, and during that time the stranger was fast nearing the barge.

"They see us—thank the gods, they see us!" at length broke from Ludim's lips, and with a firmer hold he swayed the tiller as the sea swept against the broad rudder.

And so it proved, for as the old man spoke, the vessel slightly changed her course and stood directly for the barge, and in another half hour she was alongside. A line was thrown—Ludim caught it—the boat was drawn up beneath the vessel's bulwarks, and ere long the three fugitives stood upon the deck of a Tyrian war-ship. Armed men thronged the decks, and bright spears gleamed in the morning sunlight.

"As I live," cried the captain of the ship, "Kison Ludim has come to life!"

The old man gazed about him but made no reply.

"By all the gods!" continued the captain, as his eye fell upon Marina, "and this is his fair daughter. Is't not so, Ludim?"

"That girl is my child, sir," said Ludim.

"Ho, there! let go your laziness and spring to your posts. Our head is now for Tyre."

"Can you not land us at Sidon?" asked Ludim.

"No," answered the captain, with a sparkling eye. "We go to Tyre, where five hundred pieces of gold are mine if I get yon beauty safely to the king."

There was a rattling among the ropes, a flapping of the sails, the ship drifted a moment as she lost her headway, and then, as the broad canvass caught the breeze again, she started once more on her way—and that was the way to Tyre!

"This is better than the frail barge," whispered Esther, whose face was lighted up with radiant hope.

"Alas!" murmured Marina, "'twould be hard to choose between the cold, quiet grave we have escaped, and the fate that now awaits us."

"Courage, courage. Look up, Marina. Hope never dwells at your feet—it is a habitant of the skies!"



## CHAPTER XXI.

## ONE MYSTERY CLEARED—ANOTHER DARKER STILL.

THE sun had sunk into the blue bosom of the Mediterranean, and twilight had cast its gauzy mantle over Tyre. The king was in his divan sipping from a golden cup which a slave had just filled with wine.

"Phalis," he said, "what have we now to fear? That strange armorer is dead and buried, and there are none now to thwart us."

"Strato is still at large," returned the prince.

"Strato!" uttered Mapen, with a sarcastic curl of the lips.

"He's a boy, Phalis. We have nothing to fear from him."

"But the daughter of Kison Ludim is not in our power."

"I care not for that, so long as she shows not herself in Tyre," said the king. "But if she does come, she is ours."

Phalis gazed hard upon his father, and a shadow passed over his countenance, for he knew that the king spoke not from cool judgment. The wine cup gave him the sentiments he uttered.

"Ha! who have we here?"

"Sire!" exclaimed a messenger, entering at that moment, "there are signals from the shore."

"Ah, and what say they?"

"One of your ships is approaching."

"From whence?"

"The north."

"Now start thee, Phalis, and call up the guard!" shouted the king, as he cast the wine cup upon the floor, and sprang to his feet. "From the north! Her signal?"

"The crown," answered the messenger.

"Then, by my royal diadem, the bird is caged at last! Haste, Phalis, for 'tis our chiefest ship that is coming in."

With eager steps the prince hastened upon his mission, and after he had gone the king dwelt in a hopeful, merry mood. The fumes of the wine had gone before the excitement of the news he had received, and with a cooler head he awaited the coming of further intelligence.

Three hours flew by.

Mapen had grown uneasy and nervous, but the sound of approaching steps called a flush of expectation to his face, and in a moment more the doors were open. The prince entered first, and by the hand he led the trembling Marina. The king was upon the point of uttering an exclamation of joy, when his eye fell upon another object that made him turn pale.

"Eternal heavens! Has the sea given up its dead?" he ejaculated, while he strained his eyes upon the haggard features of Ludim.

"You see me once again, sire," returned the old man, meeting the gaze of his monarch with a steady eye.

"Why is not thy spirit in the other world, old dotard? They told me you were drowned."

"Then they lied to you, sire. I was not drowned, as you may well see."

"And so they did lie, good Ludim," returned the king, in a tone which played dubiously between sarcasm and ill-affected concern. "I have mourned thy loss as of one who was irredeemably gone; but, thank the gods, you have been restored to us in right good sense."

"I trust it may prove so," said Ludim.

"You must have had a narrow escape," intimated Mapen.

"Very," returned the old noble, with a kindling eye.

"Some stray timber, or a vessel, perhaps?"

"'Twas neither, sir."

"How? You did not surely swim?"

"No, I ran."

Mapen bent eagerly forward, and a pallor overspread his features.

"I ran," continued Ludim. "Now, king, you need not utter falsehood more. I was not cast into the sea, as you so kindly provided for me. You gave your mission to one who loved gold too well for that, and he sold me into captivity. Now, sire, helpless and defenceless, I await your royal pleasure."

Many shades of emotion passed over the face of the monarch, as these words slowly and distinctly fell upon his ear. At first he turned pale with fear, but soon the struggling ceased, and he looked the proud, determined king—a deep fire was in his eye, and resolution sat upon his brow.

"Ludim," he said, "I did order your death, for you would have thwarted me, but since that power is no longer yours you may live; but every soul of that vessel's crew who took you away shall die! You shall live to be the father of a queen!"



"Mercy, sire!" cried Marina, falling upon her knees at the monarch's feet. "Do not force me to this. I am but a humble girl, and not fit to be the wife of a king."

"Thou art just the one; so arise, my fair lady."

As Mapen spoke he took the poor girl by the hand, and raised her up. She felt no spirit of resistance, nor did she think of opposing fate further. Her face was one speaking mirror of heart-broken misery, and bowing her head in anguish she sobbed aloud.

"Sire," cried the aged father, for the first time moved to supplication, "give over this strange scheme. Take pity on the poor girl you thus condemn to lasting misery."

"It cannot be done," decidedly answered the king.

"Oh, say not so! Hear me, hear me, sire," supplicated Marina, once more gaining power to speak. "I cannot love your son. I should but make him a miserable, unhappy wife—my tears would ever bedew our bridal way, and my moans of anguish would be the only song of my heart. Grant my prayer—O sire, grant it!"

"Will you not listen, sire?" urged Ludim.

"I cannot. She must marry the prince."

"But why?"

"Because"——

"Because what, sire?" anxiously begged the old man, as the monarch hesitated.

For several moments the king regarded the party before him in silence; then he turned and motioned for the soldiers to leave the apartment and wait without.

"Call upon me, to-morrow," he said to the captain of the ship, "and my treasurer shall count to you the gold I promised."

When the doors were closed, Mapen bent upon the old man a peculiar look, and with his lips half shut together, he said:—

"Kison Ludim, I have not sought the hand of your daughter for my son because he bears her much love, nor is it to me that the blame attaches. There is a power above mine that has decreed this thing."

"And that power"——

"Is the Oracle!" uttered Mapen, in a trembling voice.

"And has the Oracle of Hercules truly said that the prince must wed my daughter?" asked Ludim, starting forward.

"Ay," answered the king. "So hath it spoken."

"Then the will of the gods be done!" murmured the old man, and turning to his daughter he said, while he laid his trembling hand upon her fair brow:—

"We may not resist or implore further. The god hath spoken—we will humbly bow to the fiat. Good may come out of it, though now we see it not."

"And this then is my fate?" fell from Marina's lips, as she gazed mournfully up into the monarch's face.

"'Tis as the gods have spoken," said Mapen, in a calm but yet triumphant tone.

"*'Tis false!*" uttered a musical voice, and at the same moment Esther stepped forward and took the poor girl by the hand.

"Ha! What is this?" cried the king, shaking like a wind-driven bough.

"I say you speak falsely!" returned Esther, looking calmly upon the monarch.

"Ye gods! how came this mad girl here? Who are ye?"

"One that knows what the Oracle spoke," answered the undaunted girl.

"Out upon thee, thou daughter of Tartarus!" cried the enraged Mapen. "The god spoke as I have said."

"What good can come out of this, thou daring king? Can aught of thine change the revelation of the Oracle? or dost think to grasp the decree and fashion thine own interests to it?"

The king, the prince, and all, gazed in wonder upon the strangely working features of the bold young girl who had thus spoken. Mapen's anger changed to astonishment of the blankest description.

"What babbling is this?" he asked at length. "What mean you, girl?"

"I mean what I say, king. The Oracle said not that Marina should wed with your son."

"Ha! and what words spoke it then?" quickly asked Ludim.

"Its words were these: 'She who dwells beneath the roof of Kison Ludim, and is called Marina, shall be Queen of Tyre!'"

"Ay, by marrying the prince, my son!" exclaimed Mapen, suddenly starting from his fear.

"It said not so," returned Esther.

"But so it must have meant, and so it shall be," madly cried the monarch.

Esther smiled—a smile so strange, so deep, that Mapen was more startled by it than by the words she had spoken.

"By the gods!" he uttered, "tell me who thou art?"

"The daughter of an honest man," she answered. "Gio, the armorer of Tyre, is my father."



“Ha! A fit daughter for such a sire.” And then, while a grim look of triumph passed over his features, he added:—

“Such poisonous fruit will soon wilt and die after its parent stem is cut down. Now take heed to thyself how that tongue of thine wags, for thy father can no longer protect thee.”

“You know him not, sir king.”

“I know that he is dead!”

“*Dead!*” shrieked Esther, starting forward and gazing intently into the monarch’s face. “Said you he was dead?”

“He is.”

“And you caused it!”

“No, no,” involuntarily dropped from Mapen’s lips, as he fairly quailed before the fierce fire that beamed from out the eyes of the being before him.

“Then how died he? How?”

“He died in the temple, and Balbec sent his body hither; so I know and rejoice that he is safely dead.”

A long moment Esther gazed earnestly into the king’s face—then a peculiar shadow flitted across her features, and in tones of marked emphasis she said:—

“O king! ’tis well for thee thy hand did not this deed.”

“Would your fair hand have avenged him?” said the king, in mocking tones.

“Yes!” exclaimed Esther, her eyes flashing forth sparks that seemed to come from two orbs of deep fire. “Had hand of yours harmed but a hair of Gio, your gorgeous palace should have been your funeral pyre, and upon your foul carcase the carrion bird should have satiated!”

The inspired girl stood like a goddess. Her right foot was extended, her fine cut nostrils dilated, and her finger pointed significantly downward. One step Mapen made in advance, but there he stopped. A minute he stood irresolute, and then turning to his son, he said, while he fain would have forced a look of unconcern to his features:—

“She shall be your wife, Phalis. This poor girl has lost her senses.”

“She must be mine,” returned the prince; but in tones so faltering that the words seemed unconsciously uttered.

“She shall be yours to-night. What ho! Without there.”

A soldier entered.

“Go bid the priest Abdalzar, that he attend me here. Tell him, too, there is need of haste.”

Marina gazed inquiringly into the face of Esther.

“All hope is gone!” she murmured, while her bosom heaved painfully.

“Not all Let this thing go on.”

“But your father’s gone.”

“I have another!”

Marina started at the strange words, but at that moment she met the eye of the king, and with a cold shudder she turned towards her father. He clasped her to his bosom, but ’twas with a trembling embrace, and the word “destiny” fell from his lips.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE INSURRECTION.

It lacked half an hour of midnight. Dark clouds had been piling themselves up in the heavens till they reached the zenith, and now they hung o’er the city of Tyre like the black pall of death. There was no break in the sable mass—no single spot by which to tell that the sky had not always been as black as now. A mournful wind went chanting through the long avenues and among the cypress trees, and small drops of rain began to descend and patter upon the pavement. Brawlers had shrunk from their nocturnal orgies in the streets, and sought the shelter of their dwellings, where their revels would still break occasionally upon the night air. Along the walls the sentinels had crept into their niches, and there they stood peering forth into such thick darkness, that it seemed as though their spear-heads would have cleared it. The waves dashed strangely against the rocks without, and their harsh voices seemed joined with the wind in mournful wailings. Where a lamp sent forth its dim rays from some open window, it looked as though a fiery eye were trying to peer out beyond the impenetrable veil, casting no light around, relieving nought of the gloom, but only seeming a speck of red against the sable wall of night.



At a single point near the temple, a footfall might have struck upon an ear near enough to have heard it, though nothing could have been seen. And had you stood still, you might have heard other footfalls following the first; or had you looked off to where a lamp stood near a window, some twenty yards distant, you might have seen that for an instant it occasionally disappeared. At first it might have seemed as though some hand moved it quickly away, and then set it back again; but the exactness with which it ever re-appeared in the same spot would soon show you that opaque bodies were constantly passing between the two points.

But this pattering of feet was not confined to the grand temple piazza. All over the city—upon every sidewalk, near every station—it might have been heard.

Ah! here comes one so near that we can see the outlines of a man. Let's follow him, for he seems upon an anxious errand. He cuts along through the darkness with cautious tread, avoiding such places as may give room to human beings, till he enters the chief bazaar, and ere long he stops in front of a rich dwelling, from the window of which struggle the beams of a large lamp. 'Tis Strato's house!

"Ha!" exclaimed the young merchant, starting up from his seat and gazing upon the unbidden intruder. "What! this you, Alzac? And armed!"

"'Sh! Flee, my good lord! Flee at once to your treasure vault beneath the building. There's safety for you there, but there's none here."

"What is it? What means this, Alzac?" uttered young Strato, gazing with surprise and alarm upon his dependent.

"It means that you must seek a place of safety. Follow me to the vault, and I will lock you in."

"But why? What means this strange request? Why are you thus armed with my sword? Are you mad, Alzac?"

"No, no, my lord. I am not mad, but I would save you. Come—there is no time to lose."

"But this danger—what is it?"

"In truth, then, good master, the people have risen!"

"Good God, is this thing possible!" cried young Strato, starting back aghast.

"Yes. The avenger is let loose upon the tyrants, and nothing now can stop him. Too long have the necks of the poor people been trampled in the dust, and now they cry for justice, and death alone can cheat them of what they seek. Ask no more, good master, for I cannot stop to answer. You have ever been kind to those under you, and

I will save you; and, moreover, whenever a Tyrian noble has a kind heart, there is a hand to save him. Come!"

"But the defenceless women?"

"Not a female will be harmed. Their sex is sacred. To the vault! Quick!"

As Alzac thus spoke he took the young man by the hand and motioned him earnestly, entreatingly, to follow. Strato hesitated no longer, for he saw at once his danger, nor was he wholly unprepared for this dreadful catastrophe, as the reader already knows. Alzac took the lamp and led the way, and only once did Strato speak—then he asked:—

"Has Gio aught to do with this?"

"No," returned Alzac. "The armorer knows nothing of it, nor has he in any way a hand in it, though be it aware that the people have long thought of it and seriously meditated upon it. But, my lord, have you seen Gio lately?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because he has not been in his shop, and some say he is dead."

"I have not seen him," returned Strato; but he said no more, and in a moment afterwards he was safely locked up among his glittering gold and jewels.

"Ah, here comes the priest," uttered the king, as the large doors were swung open. "Good health be with thee, sacred sir. 'Tis late to call for one like thee, but the case in hand brooks no delay. Shut fast the doors, and let no one approach."

The priest bowed to the king, and in a tone of some surprise, he asked:—

"What is this business, sire?"

"A marriage."

"Are the parties?"

"A truce to thy parties," interrupted Mapen. "'Tis the prince you are to marry, so hasten thy ceremonies."

"But the lady, sire?"

"Is the daughter of this old man."

The priest looked upon Kison Ludim, and started. In a moment his face was calm again, and he proceeded to the spot where stood the prince. The monarch laid his hand upon Ludim's shoulder, and with a look of demoniac meaning, he silently pointed to the drooping form of Marina.

The old man read his death warrant in that look, and with a fearful shudder in his frame, and a flood of agony in his furrowed countenance, he took Marina by the hand and led her towards the spot where stood the priest and the prince.



Phalis and Marina stood side by side. The priest united their hands, and then he threw over their heads a mantle of purple silk, fringed and worked with gold. His lips were opened as if to speak, when his eye caught the expression that dwelt upon the face of Esther, who had crept near to the side of Marina. In an instant, however, he seemed to comprehend that she had a right there, and again his lips separated.

"Hark!" suddenly exclaimed Phalis, letting go the hand he held, and bending his head eagerly forward.

"'Tis nothing but some midnight brawlers," hastily said the king. "Ha! there sounds the gong. 'Tis midnight indeed. Hasten—hasten with the ceremony, for by the power of Hercules himself, this meeting breaks not up till Marina is married to the prince; and thus shall the Oracle be fulfilled. O priest, on with the work!"

"Ye gods! there's more than midnight brawling in that!" cried Phalis, throwing the bridal canopy from his head, and springing forward. "Hark! Hear those shouts! And by the god Pluto, there's clashing of steel within the piazza of the palace!"

The king turned pale.

"Ho! Without there! Slaves!" he cried.

Not a sound indicated the attendance of those whom he called. Again, in thunder tones, he cried for his attendants; but not one came.

"This smacks of rebellion!" he exclaimed, trembling with a fearful forboding.

Marina looked upon her father, but his face was livid with terror. She sought protection. Then she turned towards Esther. The latter was as calm and unmoved as though she had been alone in her own chamber, and hurrying to her side, the poor girl laid her head upon her bosom.

Mapen turned back to where, back of the throne, stood a dozen of his trusty tools—slaves, who ever did his bidding with ready hands—and in frightened tones he ordered them to spring to the doors and find his guard. Quickly they obeyed, but hardly had they passed the threshold, when they hesitated and turned back.

The first low sound that attracted the attention of the prince had now swollen to a horrid din, and amid the yells and shouts was plainly heard the sharp clang of arms. Nearer and nearer it came—the very air was loaded with the groans and curses—torches flashed through the windows; and when the slaves had opened the large doors, the glare of red lights poured up from the pavement below.

“The king! the king!” shouted a hundred voices. “Death to the tyrant! Death for those who murder our children! On—on! The king! the king!”

“Flee!” uttered Phalis, grasping his father by the arm, and essaying to pull him towards a small side door.

They leaped to the door, but it was locked upon the outside! They turned, and the thunder of voices was in the passage. On the next instant the insurgents rushed into the apartment. Hand to hand stood the king’s own slaves; but they fought against men who were panting for liberty, and in a single minute the last man of them was borne back upon the sword point of the citizen Gaba.

“The king!” cried one who led the rest, and in whose noble looking countenance we recognize the features of Uz.

“Down with the tyrant!”

“The king is mine—remember,” cried Uz, and as he thus spoke, he pressed upon his monarch.

The affrighted Mapen begged, but none heard him; he swung his short dagger frantically in the air, but even while he did so, the avenging steel of Uz pierced his breast. The prince fell beneath a dozen strokes of as many swords, and then the avengers looked round upon those who stood aside. The priest they would not touch—the girls were sacred by their oath, but upon Ludim they looked with flashing eyes.

“Who have we here?” cried one.

“Down with him!” shouted those behind. “He is a Tyrian noble!”

“Hold! Back! Touch not a hair of that man’s head!” exclaimed Esther, springing between Ludim and the slaves.

“Down with him! He should not be here in secret with the king!” yelled a dozen voices, and the angry strife waxed hotter. “Ay, down with him!” and a score of bright, sharp swords were raised for the old man’s life.

“Freemen of Tyre, stand back!” at this moment came in deep, thunder tones from the large doorway.

At the sound of that voice every sword dropped; and even the king was startled back to life, for he bent forward from the wall against which he had fallen, and with a deep groan he strained his rolling eyes in the direction from whence the voice had come.

Instinctively the insurgents fell back on either hand, and up through the passage thus formed stalked the giant form of Gio, the armorer of Tyre! On the instant, Esther sprang forward, and fell upon her father’s bosom, while Marina, with a movement equally as impulsive, clasped her hands together and thanked the great God that she was saved, for



in that strange man she knew she beheld one who was able to deliver her.

“O God!” fell in rattling accents from the lips of the dying king, as he placed his left hand hard upon his bleeding wound, while with the other he supported himself from falling. “Has death itself turned treacherous? Does the grave turn forth rebellion? Do the mouldering bones of the pit take to themselves flesh and life, and pass before me thus in battle form? O Gio! why art thou come untimely from thy tomb?”

“Mapen,” returned the armorer, as he stepped to the side of the king, “I told thee we should meet again.”

“I remember; but how art thou alive?”

“I have not been dead.”

“That must be false,” uttered Mapen, vainly endeavoring to raise himself further up. “I saw thee dead, I saw thee buried, and now the grave has sent thee forth to lead on this most foul rebellion. Oh, oh! what powers have combined against me!”

“Mapen,” pronounced Gio, in accents of deep distinctness, “with this rebellion I have nothing to do. Not one word of mine has gone to kindle this spark in the bosoms of the Tyrian people; but it has been your own wickedness and lust—your own iron grasp of willful wrong—the curse of your own wicked satellites. I had a different power from this to have hurled against your head, had need have been, and though its results might not have been so fearful in their extent, yet upon you they would have had the same weight. I have long seen the clouds that penetrated this storm, but I lent not my breath to fan them up. No, wicked man, I have rather endeavored to keep back this result by reforming the abuses that have led to it. The powers that have combined against you are nothing but the wills of your people to be free from the curses you have heaped upon them.”

“But who art thou? Oh, tell me! Did I not see thee dead?”

“You did not see me dead,” answered Gio. “’Twas the priest of Hercules you saw. His body lay cold before your gloating eyes, not mine. Balbec is no more!”

“What mystery is this? What—what fated conjuration gave him those features?”

“He bore them from his mother,” said Gio, while a shade passed over his face. “The same mother gave us both birth, and we both saw the light at the same hour. The priest was named Gio Balbec; I am another Gio!”

“ Another Gio! ” iterated the monarch, removing his left hand from the wound, and raising it tremblingly towards the wonderful man. “ You are not the—the ”——

Mapen’s lips trembled in vain to finish the sentence—a look of awe and reverence was blended with the death struggle—the last syllable ended in a low, gurgling sound—and the fallen monarch rolled over upon the gory pavement. Tyre had no king!



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE CURIOUS ELECTION.

THE wave of rebellion had rolled over the city. The avenging hand had struck its fearful blow, and beneath the fell stroke thousands had fallen in a single night. Wickedness and crime, lust and debauchery, and tyranny and oppression, had all been swept away together. The people had studied well their vantage; all their plans had been formed with that precision which the coolness of determined spirits imparts, and they had acted with that perfect unanimity to which the hope of liberty lights the way. Terrible and bloody as had been the stroke, it was well deserved wherever it fell.

The last vestige of the strife had disappeared from Tyre. The blood had been washed from the pavements, and the dead had been all buried.

In the great square of the temple, gathering around the huge brazen statue of Apollo, crowded the self-freed Tyrians.

"A king! A king!" sounded from a thousand lips as the mighty crowd swayed to and fro. "Let's have a king to rule us justly and protect us in our rights."

"Who shall it be?" ran like a spark of electricity from lip to lip.

"A king! A king!" came from those who stood outside.

The form of Uz was seen to rise upon the pedestal on which stood the brazen Apollo.

"Uz shall be our king."

"No, no," cried the old man. "Let us choose one."

"How shall it be?" asked those who stood nearest; and the question ran back till all had asked it.

There was a consultation about the pedestal. Those who could crowd within earshot listened attentively.

"We must have a king," said Uz, stepping down from his elevated position; "and with a king of our own choice we shall be happy."

"But how shall we choose him?" asked Gaba. "Little can be done in such a mass of mind. A few cannot do it to

satisfy the whole, nor can the whole work together; 'twould be worse than chaos."

An old man, over whose head the frosts of near a hundred years had bleached, stepped tremblingly through the crowd, and having gained a position to command attention from those who held the consultation, he said:—

"Brothers, let him whose sight is quickest be your king."

"But how shall we decide?"

"I will tell you: at the first break of day on the morrow, go you forth to the field east of the city, and he who first detects the rising sun shall be your king."

"Good," exclaimed Uz; and those who stood around also cried out to the same effect.

Uz once more ascended the pedestal, and proclaimed what the old man had said. The words were passed from mouth to mouth, and gradually there arose one universal shout upon the air:—

"He who on the morrow first detects the rising sun shall be our king!"

The first gray streaks of coming day had hardly drawn their pencillings along the eastern horizon when the freed-men of Tyre began to pour forth from the city. The curious proposition had given entire satisfaction to all, and they looked joyous as they wended their way to the scene of the novel trial.

The field to which they had been directed lay to the east of the city, and as the citizens one after another arrived upon the spot, they fixed their eyes upon the eastern horizon, where the warm glow was already appearing. Some of the more ambitious climbed up into the trees, some stood upon rocks, and others crowded upon the gentle swells of land that rose up about them. One man alone stood calmly behind his brethren, with his arms folded across his breast. He made no exertion to gain a position for observation, nor did he even seek for the bright orb of day, for his eyes were turned back upon the city.

That man was Alzac, young Strato's friend.

"How is this, Alzac?" asked Uz, laying his hand upon his shoulder. "Why look you not for the sun?"

"So perhaps I may."

"But you will not find it in the west."

"'Twas in the west last night," replied Alzac.

"Why, foolish fellow," uttered Uz, in mingled surprise and pity, "have you lived so long and do not know where the sun rises?"



“Are not all the rest looking towards the east?” asked Alzac.

“Yes, of course they are.”

“Then may not one be permitted to look towards the west?”

“Certainly, if he chooses.”

“Well, I do choose so to do, for I tell thee I last night saw the sun in that spot.”

Those who heard this reply laughed aloud, and cried:—

“Let him look; such a fool deserves not to be king.”

Alzac made no reply, but with his arms still folded he gazed back upon the city he had left. The eastern horizon grew brighter and brighter, and those in the tree-tops gazed forth with aching, straining eyes.

Suddenly all eyes were startled by the voice of Alzac.

“There are the first rays of the morning sun!” he shouted, as he raised his finger, and pointed to the highest spire in the city, upon the gilded point of which gleamed the bright rays of the rising orb!

In an instant all saw the secret of Alzac’s course. He had indeed detected the rising sun before it appeared in the east, and they all shouted:—

“Alzac shall be our king!”

“But tell us the truth, Alzac,” said one of the leaders, with a searching glance, “did this strange foresight come from your own wit?”

The man trembled and turned pale. He hesitated in his reply.

“Tell us truly,” said Uz. “Did your own thoughts conceive this idea?”

“No,” answered Alzac.

“Who, then, was it?”

“I dare not tell. Harm might come to him.”

“No, he shall not be harmed.”

“Then,” answered he, “it was my young Lord Strato, whom I saved. He told me that you would all look to the east, but that if I would fasten my eyes upon the highest spire in the city, I should see the sunbeams there ere the sun was fairly in sight from below.”

A low murmur ran through the assembled multitude, and while yet Alzac trembled for the result of his information, Uz mounted upon a high rock, and in a clear, loud voice, he shouted:—

“Brothers, this man hath been preserved to us by the gods. He has traded in other countries, he is deeply studied in business, and he is one upon whom the great God has set

the crown of humanity. Strato shall be our king. All hail to the voices of the gods! ”

“ Hail! hail! Strato, King of Tyre! ” arose upon the air. Lip after lip caught it up, and gradually every tongue let loose the cry.

The Tyrians had elected their King! \*

\* These events are historical facts—both the death of Mapen, and the strange election of Strato; and the dynasty thus born lasted till the scourge of Alexander the Great.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## A STRANGE DEVELOPMENT.

AROUND the royal throne of Tyre show we now a different scene from that which last we saw there. Strato wore the crown and held the sceptre. The fair Marina stood there, with faint blushes upon her cheek and happiness sparkling in her eye. By her side stood the strange but faithful Esther, and near at hand was Kison Ludim. Nearer still to the throne was Gio, and as he gazed about him all regarded him with wondering interest.

Both Ludim and the young king looked troubled and perplexed, and even the beautiful Marina wore amid all her happiness a slight shade of doubt and anxiety. A priest was in waiting, and about lay the paraphernalia for a royal wedding, and yet all looked towards the armorer in silent expectation. At length he stepped forward and fastened his eye upon Ludim. The old man trembled with a strange emotion, and then he looked upon his daughter. Marina wondered at its import, but ere long Gio spoke, and all ears were bent to catch the sound of his voice, for they would know the strange mystery that clung about him. Even the servants, and those who were in attendance, drew nearer and listened.

"Kison Ludim," he said, "you no doubt wonder why I have taken such an interest in the welfare of that fair girl. I have done it almost upon a supposition, though now I hesitate not to believe my impression is correct. Tell me one thing: Is that hand of hers yours to give to the young king?"

"I believe such a right is mine," returned the old man, but yet trembling with some undefined fear.

"Is Marina your child?"

"I have been a father to her."

"So you have, Ludim, but is she your own flesh and blood?"

The old man started.

"Answer me," continued Gio.

"Then she is not."

“And are you not my father?” uttered Marina, half springing towards Ludim.

“No, sweet one, you are no blood of mine,” returned the old man; “but I would never have told thee of this had not this strange man by some means guessed my secret.”

The kind hand of Esther held Marina back, and Gio continued:—

“How long is it since you adopted this child?”

“It must now be over eighteen years,” replied Ludim, after a moment’s thought.

“Was she brought to you, or did you find her yourself?”

“I found her myself.”

“And how?”

“It was, as I tell you, over eighteen years ago,” answered the old man, with considerable emotion. “I had been over to the coast for the purpose of obtaining information of a caravan that was daily expected from Arabia, and in which I had much merchandize. I only had some half a dozen slaves with me, and after waiting till near nightfall without seeing anything of the caravan, I turned back towards the city. The barge I had left nearly a mile behind, and while walking leisurely back to it, a curious looking object in the water arrested my attention. It appeared to be a chest of some sort, and to have been just washed up. I bade the slaves wade in and bring it to the shore, where I had it opened, and you may judge of my surprise upon finding within a female infant, near whose head, and arranged with consummate skill, was a leathern bag of goat’s milk, from which the child seemed to have been drawing sustenance. The bottom of the box was heavily loaded with lead, while the bedding was of the most costly material. The infant I took to my house, and having forbidden my slaves upon pain of death, to mention the subject, I gave it to one of my females who at that time had just given birth to a son, and she nursed it till it gained in strength, and then I procured for it a more suitable attendance. From that time the child has grown up under my own care, and she is such as any parent might be proud of.”

“And Marina is that child?” uttered Gio, in trembling, anxious tones.

“She is.”

“And she is my own daughter!” cried the strange man, as the warm tears started forth from his eye.

As he spoke, he opened his arms and looked upon the child. None could have resisted the silent appeal, but in the heart of Marina, the flame of the love she had never before



known sprang into being—she looked upon Gio—she forgot that he was an humble artizan—she forgot that she had been bred a lady—she only knew that she looked upon the man who was the author of her being, and with a cry of joy she sprang forward and rested her head upon the bosom that was waiting to receive her.

“Oh,” murmured the mysterious man, as he raised his eyes towards heaven, “how have I longed for this moment! How has my soul travailed in anguish and fear when hope would dare to paint such a re-union as this! Great God above all gods, I thank thee for this, and in this merciful dispensation I see that I am forgiven! Marina, my child! Oh, bliss! Oh, happiness!”

The tears gushed forth from the strong man’s eyes, and every muscle was strained with the excitement of his happy heart. Marina looked up into his face, and if there had lingered even the vestige of a shadow in her soul it was all gone now. The tears of joy, of a new-found rapture, were coursing down her cheeks, when she felt a light hand upon her shoulder.

“Sister!” spoke a soft, musical voice; and as Marina turned she beheld the radiant countenance of Esther beaming in lovely joy upon her.

“And is this, too, true?” murmured the half bewildered girl.

“Yes, yes, Marina,” returned Gio, gazing with fond pride upon the two fair girls. “You are both my children.”

“Ah,” said Esther, with a happy smile, as she drew her arm around the other’s neck, “while I was bearing you company amid those dark dangers through which we have passed, you little thought ’twas a sister who smiled upon you, who wept with you, and who bade you hope.”

“And you knew it all the time?” said Marina.

“Yes,” returned Esther. “I have known it ever since you first took refuge in our house.”

As Esther spoke she drew Marina aside, and Gio approached the king.

“Strato,” he said, “you see what has just passed?”

“I do,” returned the young monarch, “and I’m lost in astonishment.”

“Astonishment?” repeated Gio.

“Ay, I’m deep buried in wonder.”

“But the thing has explained itself. All is plain now.”

“And yet I’m astonished at what has transpired.”

“And now,” said Gio, bending upon the king a searching look, “what say you to the nuptials?”

"Are we not here to have them performed?" returned Strato, while a slight shade of fear passed across his face.

"For that purpose we came."

"And surely you will not deny me what good Ludim had promised?"

"Look ye, Strato; when you sought the hand of that fair girl, you thought her of gentle blood. Now that she proves to be the daughter of a poor armorer, will you still seek it?"

The young monarch made no answer in words. For a moment a strange light beamed in his eyes, and then he arose and stepped down from his throne. He took the jeweled crown from his head, and placing it upon the brow of Marina, he knelt at her feet.

"She is yours," cried Gio, as he stepped forward and raised the king to his feet. "Here, take back your crown; and now let the rites proceed."

"But first," said Strato, in an earnest tone, "tell me more of this. There is a deep mystery here which you have not opened to us."

"And you shall know it all ere long."

"But now," urged the monarch. "Tell me who and what you are?"

"Yes, father," uttered Marina, in a persuasive tone.

"Not now. Let this marriage proceed. For that we are here assembled; afterwards you shall know all."

"Come," whispered Esther, "you can trust me once more."

Marina gazed into the face of her sweet sister and smiled, and on the next moment she was led to the royal throne.



## CHAPTER XXV.

## CONCLUSION.

AROUND the royal throne knelt a hundred faithful subjects doing homage to their king and queen. Gio alone stood erect. He knelt not, nor did he bow. Only a smile illumined his features as he saw the diadem sparkling upon his daughter's brow, and a proud look dwelt upon his face as he heard the heart-sent shouts that rent the air.

Once more all was still and quiet.

"Now, good Gio," said the young monarch, "what is this strange tale of thine? I am over-anxious to hear it, for, to tell the truth, I have more than once of late looked upon your noble features with a startling suspicion."

"And what was that suspicion?" asked Gio, with a peculiar twinkling of the eyes.

"It was that you were never in my employ."

"You were right. These hands of mine never bore the gyves of the hired laborer."

"Then you are not the armorer of Tyre?" uttered the king.

"Yes, I am."

"How!" stammered Strato. "You the armorer, and yet not my former servant? I do not comprehend."

"Nor will you so long as you attempt to arrive at a solution through your own questioning," returned Gio with a smile.

"Go on, go on," exclaimed the king in breathless anxiety.

"Now," said Gio, "you shall know it all. I am not a native of Tyre, nor yet of Phœnicia, but of a country which owes no allegiance to any other. There were two brothers of us—we were twins, and so nearly did we resemble each other that even our parents were at times mistaken. I had a wife whom I loved as the apple of my eye—one in whom was centered the whole of my heart's affection; but in an evil moment I became maddened by the thought that she was false to me. What should have put such a fancy into my head I know not—but it came, and it made me mad. My wife protested her innocence—she swore she had not wronged me—but I believed her not. At length she bore

me a child, and then—oh, horrors, the frenzy came! I looked upon the little innocent, and I swore that 'twas no child of mine. No tears, no entreaties, could change my stubborn will—the worm was cankering in my heart, and I resolved to kill the gentle offspring. My heart was kindly moved for once, for I resolved that my wife should not know of her infant's fate, so I stole away by night and carried it to the river's bank. The moon shone down brightly upon the face of the child as it snuggled to my bosom, and once it smiled upon me.

“The smile of innocence! At once the nobler thought came to me, that however my wife might have been, that gentle being was not guilty! Then I resolved that I would not kill it, but that I would give it a chance for life. I went back to the city, and had a strong box made, and so arranged that the infant might live within it for some time, and thus I took the child to the seashore and cast her upon the waters. I then wished never to see her again, but yet I secretly prayed that some kind hand might save her and rear her up.

“I returned to my home sad and morose. My wife asked for her child, and then I told her what I had done. She did not rave, she did not upbraid me, nor yet did she blame me for what I had done; but she sank, body and soul, into the dark gulf of deep despair! Gradually I became aware of my wife's innocence, and I knew that it was my own child I had consigned to the sea! Another child was born to me—the gentle Esther, but even that could not make me happy; but I grew more morose and more miserable; and at length, to cap the climax of my folly, quarrelled with my brother, Gio Balbec. Our dissensions ran so high that he resolved to banish himself from the country, and, as I have since learned from his own lips, he came to Tyre. He sought first the high priest of Hercules, with whom he made a compact, such an one as I cannot explain, but yet the purport of it I know. Gio Balbec was to let himself to Strato—your father, sire—and when the priest died he was to follow to the office. Both my brother and myself possessed strong ventriloquial powers, and whether that peculiar deception of voice served him in the temple you must judge for yourselves; I know I once deceived the king by my own powers, and he thought the oracle had spoken.

“Balbec became the priest of Hercules long before he threw off his laborer's dress, and still he worked at the forge for his master, and at stated seasons he would repair to the temple and assume the priestly disguise. With me time



sped on, but it brought me no joy. The dart of sorrow was firmly fixed in my heart, and the last smile that I saw by the soft moonlight upon my infant's face haunted me by day and by night. At length I heard from my brother, and he sent me the startling intelligence that from the lips of a dying man he had learned the fact that years before a box, such as I set adrift, was picked up by a citizen of Tyre. At once I arranged my affairs and came to this city, determined not to return till I had found my child. For the first time in long years a smile came to the face of my wife, and beneath the influence of that bright beam my whole soul was changed to a sea of swelling hope.

"I came to Tyre. My brother still resembled me so nearly that none could tell us one from the other, and seizing upon that circumstance I made my way for immediate settlement in this city. Balbec had just left your father's service, and assuming his humble armorer's dress I took his place at the forge, while he devoted all his time at the temple. Knowing the quick wit of Esther, I brought her with me, and during the last year I have worked at the humble calling I assumed, and at the same time diligently prosecuted my search. I soon saw that Tyre was badly governed, that foul sores were festering upon her social constitution, and that wickedness was stalking abroad on all hands. You may wonder that I, who had been guilty of the crime for which I suffered, should have looked upon the sins of others, but you must remember that the fault of mine was the result of a madness I could not control, and that all manners of suffering had been mine in expiation.

"At length, so vividly came the picture of Tyrian suffering to my mind, I resolved that if I found my lost child, she should be queen of Tyre. Then, oh, happy moment! I discovered her in the supposed daughter of Kison Ludim. I knew that I was not mistaken, for the same bright smile that had for so long lain upon my heart played over her features, and she looked the very counterpart of the mother who bore her. I sought the priest, my brother, and told him all, and then he made the oracle speak the determination I had made, and the mysterious decree was conveyed to Mapen. That very day the king asked Ludim for Marina's hand, and he was refused. I should have then claimed my child, but I gained an inkling of a plot among the people, and I waited for the denouement, and though that procrastination came nigh proving fatal to my hopes, yet all has turned out happily, with the single exception that I have lost my brother; but the great God called him away, and I

am content. At times I have worn the priestly robes and the white beard, while Gio Balbec has played the armorer, and hence you will see how easy has been the deception we have practised. The rest you know. The rising of the people has accomplished that which I had intended, and the circumstance has made my daughter queen of Tyre. It was I who gave to Strato the directions concerning the looking for the rising sun, for I felt assured that when the people found that he had instructed Alzac in this particular, they would give to Strato the preference, even though he were a noble. Marina, come once more to thy father's embrace."

"And my mother?" murmured the fair girl, as she sprang to her father's bosom.

"She yet lives," returned Gio, while his eyes sparkled with swimming tears.

All those who stood around were yet lost in mystery. Who is Gio? was a question that dwelt upon every lip, and a hundred tongues might have given it utterance, but for the entrance of a sweat-streaming, panting messenger.

"Sire," he cried, "we are lost! The coast opposite to the city is swarming with armed men, and many of them have taken boats to cross over. We cannot oppose them, for our forces are not organized."

The young monarch turned pale and started up from his throne, but he knew not how to act.

"Saw you their banner?" asked Gio.

"Yes."

"And what bore it?"

"A golden bull."

"Strato," said the strange man, "you need not fear. These people are friends."

"But whence come they? Who are they?"

"They bear the royal standard of Egypt," calmly returned Gio.

"By the powers of darkness!" cried the monarch in terror; "then it must be that Egypt's fearful king has come to subdue us!"

As he spoke, the thundering of deep-toned voices fell upon his ear. The trampling of many feet was heard upon the pavement of the piazza, and ere long a squad of frightened soldiers rushed into the apartment. They had no opportunity to speak, however, for hard upon them followed a crowd of armed men clothed in gorgeous apparel. Strato sunk back upon his throne, but the intruders noticed him not. A moment the leader cast his eyes about, and they rested upon Gio.



"The king! the king!" shouted the Egyptian general, and on the instant the new comers gathered around the towering form of Gio, and fell upon their knees.

"Up, up, my loyal subjects," cried Gio. "Brought you not your queen?"

"Yes, sire. She comes now," returned the general, as he arose to his feet and made a motion for his followers to stand aside.

As he spoke, a purple pavilion was borne into the royal presence, and as the bearers sat it down, there stepped forth from it a middle-aged, but still beautiful female.

"My daughter! My husband!" she cried, and as she spoke she tottered towards the spot where stood Gio and Esther.

"Oh," she uttered, in startling accents, as she leaned back from her husband's embrace; "you have not deceived me?"

"No, dear Zenobia, she is safe!"

Marina had started forward. There was a voice in her soul that told her she looked upon the woman that bore her—a voice as strong, so sure, that she knew it spoke the truth, and with a stifled cry she put forth her arms. Zenobia gazed an instant upon the young Tyrian queen; a flood of joyous light started to her eyes, her bosom heaved with its strong emotion, and on the next moment the mother and child were weeping tears of bliss in each other's embrace.

Kison Ludim raised his eyes to heaven, and thanked God that she whom he had so carefully reared had found a mother.

"Now," said Gio, as he led Marina to the throne and placed her by the side of her husband, "you will look upon me no more in mysterious doubt, for know that I am none other than Gio Amyrtaeus, King of Egypt. And you, Strato, if you have not married the daughter of a Tyrian noble, have at least gained the hand and heart of one of earth's most noble princesses."

The young monarch sprang from his throne and bent his knee to the Egyptian king; then those who stood around followed his example, and a prolonged shout of joy rent the air.

"Rise, rise," pronounced Gio, taking young Strato by the hand, and lifting him up; and while a tear of pride and joy trembled upon his dark lashes, he continued:—

"Now, my son, take your throne, and use it for the good of Tyre. If you want an incentive to duty read the history

of earth's kingdoms. It is written in blood, and will afford grave admonition. And you, Marina, must not forget the part you are called upon to act. I leave you both a husband and a father, for though I go from you now, yet I know that Kison Ludim will be all to you that he has ever been. You will both look to the old noble for his counsel and advice, and remember how much of happiness we all owe him. My own great kingdom now claims my attention, but we shall often meet. Esther shall stay with you yet a while longer, to bless you with her sweet presence, and so shall your dear mother. Strato, your subjects are your masters, and they will love and revere you, and faithfully protect you so far as you serve them honorably and justly."

[The End.]





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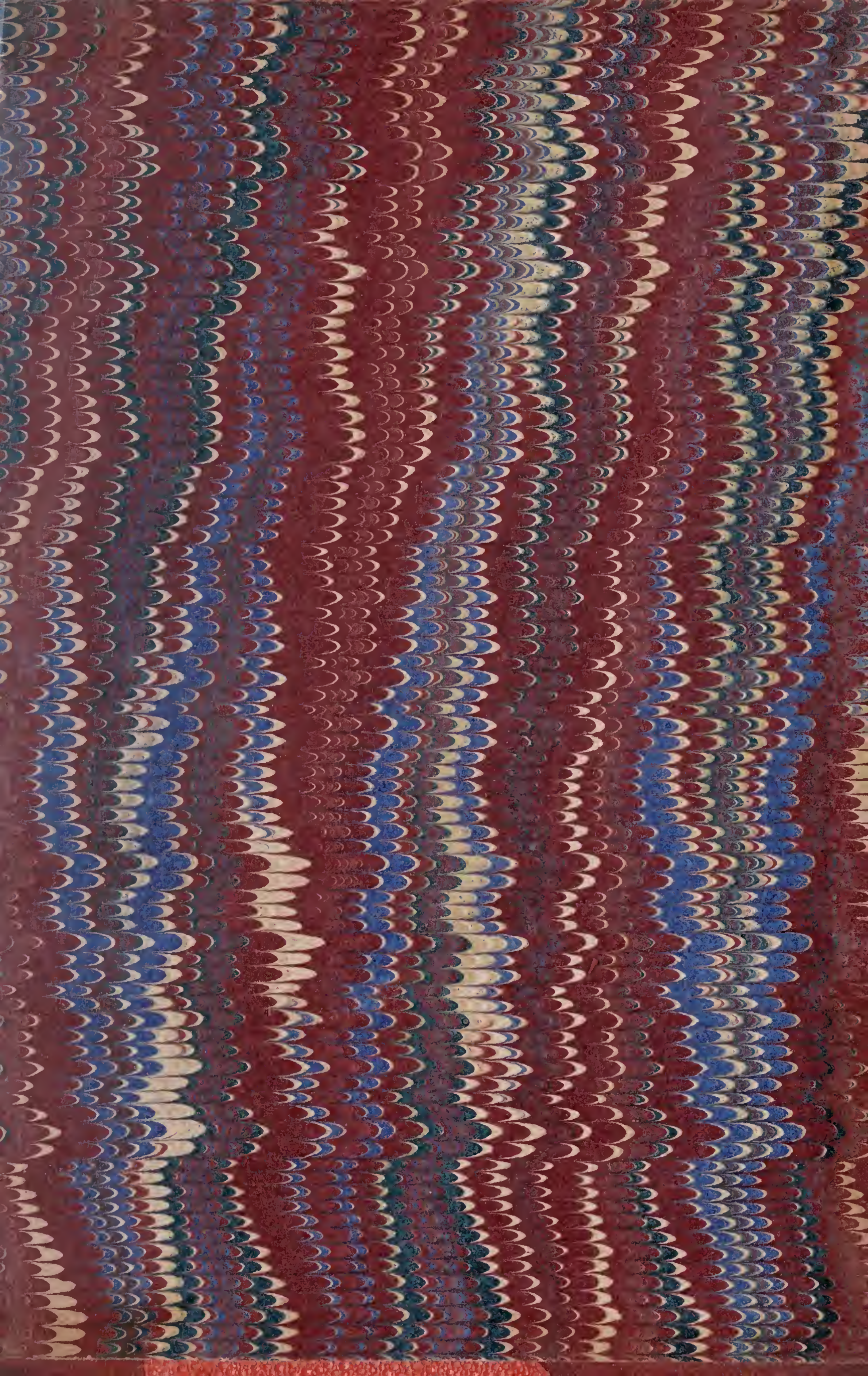














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